

Talking about the future

We can use different language forms to talk about the future.

GOING TO

WILL

PRESENT CONTINUOUS

PRESENT SIMPLE

Going to

We use **BE GOING + INFINITIVE** to talk about **plans**.

The structure often emphasises the idea of intention, or a decision that has already been made.

- ❖ We're going to get a new car soon.
- ❖ When are you going to get your hair cut?

Another use of this structure is to predict the future on the basis of a present evidence.

- ❖ Look at the sky. It's going to rain.
- ❖ Sandra is going to have another baby in June.

Will

Form: will + infinitive without *to*.

We use will to talk about something we have decided to do at the time of speaking.

- ❖ I'm busy right now. I'll call you tomorrow
- ❖ - What can I bring you? - I'll have the tuna salad, please.

Will (or shall, BE) + infinitive is used to give/ask for information about the future (eg. It will be spring soon) or guess/calculate what we think will happen (eg. Patrick will never finish that book).

Will (other usages)

-conditional use

- ❖ he'll have an accident if he goes on driving like that

-NOT used in subordinal clauses

- ❖ I'll phone you when I arrive

NOT

- ❖ I'll phone you when I ~~will~~ arrive.

Present Continuous (or Progressive)

It is most common in discussion of personal arrangements and fixed plans, when the time and place have been decided.

- ❖ I'm seeing Josh on Saturday.
- ❖ We're travelling to London next summer.
- ❖ What are you doing this evening? - I'm washing my hair.

N.B. the simple present is not often used to talk about the future.

What do you do this evening? **WRONG**

We often use the present progressive with verbs of movement, to talk about actions which are just starting.

- ❖ Are you coming to the pub?

Present Progressive and Going to

In many cases, both structures can be used to express the same idea.

- ❖ I'm washing/going to wash my hair this evening.

But there are some differences. We prefer ***going to*** when we are talking about **intentions/decisions** rather than fixed arrangements.

- ❖ I'm seeing Phil tonight (emphasis on arrangement)
- ❖ I'm really going to tell him what I think of him (emphasis on intention)
VS ~~I'm really telling him...~~

Present Simple

We can sometimes use the simple present to talk about a timetable or a programme.

- ❖ The sun rises at 6.13 tomorrow.
- ❖ My train leaves at 3 o'clock.
- ❖ What time does the bus arrive in Seattle?