

Grammar Reference

The Future Perfect

Meaning and use

We use the **future perfect** verb form to make educated guesses about things that will happen or that have happened. These predictions are based on what we know now, and are about activities that we expect to be completed by a particular time.

*This time next year, I'll **have finished** my course.*
*By the time you get back, we'll **have had** dinner.*
*On their next wedding anniversary, they'll **have been married** 50 years.*
*We're still on time: the film **won't have started** yet.*
*If they're following their schedule, they **will have arrived** yesterday.*

The **future perfect** is often used with a **by** or **in** time phrase.

***By 2020** this city will have doubled in size.*
***In June**, I'll have been unemployed for three years.*

Used in this way, **by** means up to a stated time. Other **by** time phrases are: **by the summer**, **by the end of the week**, **by this time next week/month/year**.

We can also use **by the time (that) + present simple**.

***By the time he arrives**, the film will have started.*

The expressions ... **from now** or **in... time** can be used instead of **in**.

*It's possible that **fifty years from now**, scientists will have discovered a cure for cancer.*
*It's likely that in **fifty years' time**, we will have discovered a new planet.*

Take note: future perfect for past?

It may seem strange to use a future form to talk about the past. Remember: the **future perfect** is based on what you know **now** - so it's actually a present form. In the present, we don't know with 100% certainty what will happen in the future. We also don't know everything that has happened in the past. However, if we are familiar with the way people behave, timetables and so on, we can **expect** or **assume** that certain things have happened, even if we don't know for sure.

*He'll definitely **have got** to the airport by now. It only takes an hour.*
I don't know that he has got to the airport. It only takes an hour and I expect he started the journey at the right time.

*There's no point in calling Judy. She'll **have left** by now.*
I don't know that Judy has left but I expect she has so therefore I can guess that there's no point calling her.

*If they're following their schedule, they **will have arrived** yesterday.*
I don't know for sure that they arrived but I know their schedule. I haven't heard they were delayed, so my expectation is that they arrived yesterday.

Form

Future perfect positive

subject + 'll/will + 've/have + past participle of main verb

We'll have sold the house by Christmas, I'm sure.

Future perfect negative

subject + won't + 've/have + past participle of main verb

Rahul won't have got up yet. It's too early.

Future perfect questions

Future perfect yes / no questions are made with:

will / won't + subject + have + past participle of main verb

Will you have read all the reports by the end of the day?

Question word questions are made like this:

question word + will / won't + subject + have + past participle of main verb

How much money will we have made by the end of the year?

Take note: other modals

It's possible to use other modal auxiliaries instead of **will** in the future perfect. Different modals show how certain the speaker is about the assumption he or she is making. Remember that the assumption is made on the information the speaker has at the moment of speaking.

Compare:

*By this time next year I'll **have** passed my driving test. **Quite sure***
*By this time next year I **should have** passed my driving test. **Reasonably sure***
*By this time next year I **may have** passed my driving test. **Not so sure***
*By this time next year I **might have** passed my driving test. **Not so sure***

Take note: shall / shan't

Sometimes, and in more formal situations or in writing, we use **shall /shan't** instead of **will / won't** with **I** and **we** in future perfect sentences.

*We **shall** have visited all the museums by the time we leave Paris.*
*I **shan't** have done all my accounts by the end of the month. I'm too busy.*

Pronunciation

When using the future perfect when speaking, it's quite usual to contract the verbs **will** and **have**. This means that sometimes the **subject + will + have** will be combined into one sound of connected speech. So **I will have** becomes **I'll've** and **you will have** becomes **you'll've**.

