

Grammar Reference

Future continuous and be + infinitive with future sense

Meaning and use

Future continuous

We use the future continuous to talk about events that will be in progress at a particular time or over a period of time in the future. These are usually plans or predictions.

I will be travelling around for three months before heading for Nepal.
This time next year he'll be working in Dubai.
A taxi will be waiting outside the station when you arrive.
The sky looks very dark. It'll be raining soon.
What will you be doing tonight?

We can also use the future continuous to say that a future action will be in progress at the same time as another action.

I'll be thinking of you when I'm sitting on the beach in the Bahamas.

Be + infinitive

We use be + infinitive to talk about future events which involve instruction or necessity.

Students are to enter the hall from the back.
The children are to do their homework before watching TV.
You're not to go out without telling me!

This structure is usually used in more formal English and to describe official arrangements.

The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge are to visit India next month.
They are to be married soon.

The **be + infinitive** structure is frequently used in newspaper, radio and television reports. It expresses near certainty that what is forecast will happen.

A man is to appear in court later today charged with murder.
The company has announced that it is to close 200 of its high street stores.

Take note: future continuous for assumption, enquiries and emphasis

We can also use the future continuous to say what we believe or imagine to be true.

It's seven o'clock. She'll be driving back now.

We also use it for emphasis when talking about plans or intentions.

We won't be taking the car on the ferry to France. It's too expensive.

In this case it can be replaced by the **present continuous** or **going to + main verb**.

We're not taking the car on the ferry to France. It's too expensive. (present continuous)
(We're not going to take the car on the ferry to France. It's too expensive. (going to + main verb))

The future continuous is sometimes used to make polite enquiries about people's plans.

Will you be staying for dinner?

Form

Future continuous positive

subject + will + be + -ing form of verb

I'll be starting in the south and making my way north by train.

Future continuous negative

subject + won't + be + -ing form of verb

They won't be staying very long as they have to get back.

Questions

Present perfect continuous questions are made with:

will / won't + subject + be + -ing form of verb

We can also use question words.

Why will they be arriving so late tonight?

Be + infinitive positive

subject + be + infinitive with to

The prime minister is to give a speech tonight at the town hall.

subject + not + be + infinitive with to

You're not to go to bed late tonight. You've got to get up early tomorrow.

Take note: shall/will

Sometimes, and in more formal situations, we can also use shall / shan't instead of will / won't with I and we in future continuous sentences.

I shall be arriving late tonight as the concert doesn't finish until 11.30.
I shan't be leaving here before 8 tonight as I have so much work to do.

Pronunciation
We often use a contraction with will in the future continuous in informal writing and when speaking:

They'll be wondering where we are.

