

THE FUTURE

English does not have a future tense, although there are future verb tenses which have names, such as Future Continuous and Future Perfect. Very often, we use modal verbs to express ideas about the future. 'Will' is simply one of these, along with 'may', 'might' etc. In other situations, we use 'be going to' or present tenses to talk about the future.

In some cases, there is flexibility in the choices we make. There is not an enormous difference between: 'I'll have lunch with her on Friday', 'I'm going to have lunch with her on Friday', and 'I'm having lunch with her on Friday'. However, you are much more likely to say that it is *going to* rain in a minute than to say that it *will* rain. There are problems connected with the future in specific areas. Remember that we say 'I'll phone you when I arrive', not '**will** arrive', and 'I'll give you the book back in a minute', not '**I give**'.

THE FUTURE WITH 'WILL'

active:

subject + will + base form

The boss will arrive later.

She will not agree.

passive:

subject + will + be + past participle

The meeting will be held in the conference room.

Contractions are often used, especially in speech.

We'll decide next week.

I'm sure she won't agree.

The future with 'will' is used:

To make a prediction about the future

The plan will cause trouble.

To offer spontaneously to do something

You look hot. I'll open the window.

To announce an intention

I'll call him tomorrow.

To announce a future action

I'll be back in a minute.

THE FUTURE WITH 'BE GOING TO'

active:

subject + present form of be + going to + base form

I am going to start studying.

They are going to invite a few friends.

passive:

subject + present form of be + going to + be + past participle

She is going to be delayed.

The future with 'be going to' is used:

To forecast something based on what you see, feel etc

Look at the traffic. We are going to be late.

To refer to a project that has been planned
We're going to visit our son in New York next week.

THE FUTURE USING PRESENT TENSES

Present tenses are often used to refer to the future:

Present Simple

To refer to precise times, as in bus timetables
The bus leaves tomorrow at ten a.m.

Present Continuous

To refer to future arrangements, often with a time indicator
We're flying to Rio on Friday.

There is an idea that something has been decided and planned
He's taking a couple of days off work next week..
I'm going out with Claire on Monday.

OTHER FUTURES AND WAYS TO EXPRESS THE FUTURE

Future Continuous

Used to talk about what will be happening at a precise moment
This time next week I'll be flying over the Atlantic.

Future Perfect

To refer to something that will have been completed before a certain point
I will have finished the report by six o'clock tonight.

The verb 'be'

subject + (forms of) be + to + base form (usually formal)

*We **are** to **meet** again next month*

*The government **is** to **reconsider** the proposal.*

Adjectives

Adjectives such as 'likely', 'bound', and 'certain' are used to refer to the future

I'm likely to be a bit late this afternoon.

They're bound / certain to want to come with us.

POINTS TO REMEMBER AND ERRORS TO AVOID

- 'Will' is not used in 'when' clauses:

I'll change my computer when I have enough money.

(not ~~'when I will have...'~~)

- 'Will' does not combine with other modal verbs:

If you come closer, you will be able to hear it.

(not ~~'you will can...'~~)

- Word order in indirect questions:

I'd like to know when he will arrive.

(not ~~'when will he ...'~~)

- Present perfect, not future perfect, is used in 'when' clauses:

We'll go for a walk after we have eaten.

(not ~~'after we will have...'~~)

Exercise 1

Which words complete the sentences correctly ?

1.

It has been decided that the company will a plant in Alabama.

- a) build
- b) built

2.

When the board on the issue, the plan will certainly be approved.

- a) votes
- b) will vote

3.

The number of temporary staff in accordance with the new policy.

- a) will reduce
- b) will be reduced

4.

The new guidelines will to all employees.

- a) send
- b) be sent

5.

The exciting news is that we are to start a new phase of product development.

- a) probably
- b) about

6.

Ms Wilson doesn't know whether be appointed permanently.

- a) will she
- b) she will

7.

This annual event for small businesses is to attract even more visitors than last year.

- a) likely
- b) probably

8.

The afternoon will be sunny, but we can expect there some showers this evening.

- a) to be
- b) being

9.

We not going to renew the contract as their service has been so unreliable.

- a) are
- b) will

10.

The government increasing its spending on research over the next few years.

- a) will
- b) will be

Exercise 2

Which words complete the sentences correctly ?

1.

The product ship for about \$500.

- a) going to
- b) likely
- c) due to
- d) should

2.

Energy companies will their prices this winter.

- a) rise
- b) raise
- c) raised
- d) rising

3.

We will have our main competitor by next year.

- a) overtake
- b) overtaking
- c) overtaken
- d) overtook

4.

Earnings from exports, which were about \$1 million last year, expected to double.

- a) Ø
- b) are
- c) be
- d) will

5.

The city no longer plans the old museum, but will renovate it instead.

- a) replace
- b) to replace
- c) replacing
- d) it will replace

6.

We are seeking to exploit this opportunity before our competitors catch up

- a) Ø
- b) will
- c) will have
- d) would

7.

The magazine planning to launch a new competition for its subscribers.

- a) Ø
- b) is
- c) will
- d) would

8.

I'll see the doctor tomorrow if she give me an appointment.

- a) Ø
- b) does
- c) would
- d) can

9.

The office will be while you are away on business.

- a) decorate
- b) decorates
- c) decorated
- d) decorating

10.

Nothing stop us from achieving our aims.

- a) Ø
- b) will
- c) won't
- d) going to

an issue – a question, problem, something to discussion

staff – employees, especially in an office

guidelines -- instructions about how to proceed

unreliable – something or someone that can't be depended on

to ship – to be dispatched or supplied

earnings – revenue, money coming in

CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

There are three basic conditional structures in English: the first, second, and third (or past) conditionals. The last one of these poses the most problems, because it can be long and difficult to construct.

Another point about the past conditional is that it can mix with the second conditional: *'If we **had saved** money then, we **would be** in a better situation today.'*

Compare this to the more rigid structures of the first and second conditionals: *'If you **do this**, I **will would-...**.'* *'If you **did that**, I **would will-...**.'*

However, all conditional structures can be flexible in other ways. For example, it is often possible to use 'could' or 'might' in the place of 'will' or 'would'.

FIRST CONDITIONAL

If + subject + present simple / subject + will + base form

*If you **say** that again, I **will** **kill** you.*

.

SECOND CONDITIONAL

If + subject + simple past / subject + would + base form

*If you **worried** less, you **would** **get** more out of life.*

THIRD / PAST CONDITIONAL

If + subject + had + past participle / subject + would + have + past participle

*If you **had gone** with me, you **would** have **seen** something amazing.*

Other modal verbs can replace 'will' and 'would':

*I **may** drop in to see you if I have the time.*

*If we **had** a knife, we **could** get the lid off easily.*

*If he'd worked a bit harder, he **might** have passed the test.*

MIXED CONDITIONALS

There are alternatives to present simple in first conditional:

*If you're **thinking** of confronting her, there will be trouble.*

*If it **has stopped** raining, we'll go out for a walk.*

Third conditional can have an 'unreal' second conditional consequence:

If he'd been luckier, he would be alive today.

First and second conditionals are **not** usually mixed:

*If they don't get here soon, we **would** will start dinner.*

THE 'IF' CLAUSE

The 'if' clause usually comes first, but there is no rule about this.

'Will' and 'would' are **wrong** in the 'if' clause:

*If we **will** destroy the rainforest, future generations will not forgive us.*

*If you **would lose** lost my key, I wouldn't be very happy with you.*

An exception is in formal language such as:

If you will follow me, I'll show you your room.

ADDITIONAL POINTS:

'If I were' is more common than 'if I was' in second conditional:

If I were in your situation, I wouldn't know what to do.

In formal language, 'if' is sometimes not used, and subject-verb order is inverted:

Were we to opt for this solution, we could certainly save time.

Had I known, I would have been able to help you.

The second conditional form can refer to **the past** in sentences such as:

If tourists went there in those days, they would always be welcomed.

'Unless' means 'if ...not':

If there isn't a shop open somewhere, we won't be able to get bread.

*We won't be able to get bread **unless** there is a shop open somewhere.*

'As long as' and 'provided / providing (that)' can also express conditional ideas:

***As long as** we leave now, we'll get the last train.*

***Provided that** I had the money, I'd invest in the project.*

Exercise 1

What is the correct way to complete each sentence?

1.

If we need to be there early, a taxi.

- a) we'll take
- b) we would take

2.

What would you do if you continue to live here?

- a) couldn't
- b) wouldn't

3.

If our prices, we would become uncompetitive.

- a) went up
- b) would go up

4.

If you, I wouldn't have got the job.

- a) didn't help me
- b) hadn't helped me

5.

If you a party, I'll be the first one there.

- a) are having
- b) should have had

6.

There would have no problem if they had taken our advice.

- a) had
- b) been

7.

..... I known, I could have done something about it.

- a) If
- b) Had

8.

If healready eaten, he won't be hungry at all.

- a) has
- b) will have

9.

We'd arrived on time if we hadn't stopped for lunch.

- a) Ø
- b) have

10.

I'll text you if I a little bit late.

- a) am
- b) will be

MODAL VERBS

When people start learning English, the first modal verbs that they meet are usually 'will' and 'can'. At a basic level such simple verbs don't cause many problems. The difficulties you have with modal verbs will depend on where you are in your learning. There are basic points which you should check, such as the difference between 'mustn't' and 'doesn't/don't have to'. For example, it's **wrong** to say: *You don't have to lie; it's a very bad habit.* We always use 'mustn't' here.

Make sure that you master the use of 'will be able to' and 'will have to' to express the ideas of possibility and obligation in the future. Similarly, make sure you can use 'was/were able to' and 'had to' for the past.

There are also nuances of meaning to look at. For example, some people say that 'may' indicates something more probable than 'might'. You can approach this sort of question later.

Finally, there are one or two modal verbs which are perhaps not familiar to you. An example is 'ought to'. It's used frequently enough, so it's a very good idea to know it.

ABILITY

Use *can* for ability:

He can run quite fast.

Use *will be able to* for the future:

I'll be able to buy a flat when I have a good job.

Use *could or was / were able to* for the past:

She could / was able to swim when she was only two. (a permanent ability)

*The survivors were able to shout for help. (one specific situation; **could is not possible here**)*

PERMISSION

Use *can* for permission:

You can go now. We've finished..

***May* is possible, but very formal:**

Customers may use these parking spaces. (on a notice)

***Could* is useful in asking for permission:**

Could I have another biscuit?

SUGGESTION

Use *shall I / shall we ...?* for suggestions:

Shall I phone for a pizza?

Use *could / couldn't* for more hesitant suggestions:

Couldn't we try doing it this way?

OFFER

Use *Shall I / Shall we ...?* when offering to do something:

Shall I help you with that work?

Also note: *I'll do that for you if you like, and Can I / Could I ... (for you)?*

REQUEST

Use *can or could*:

Can you lend me your pen please?

Also note: *Will you help me, please?*

We do not use *shall, should, may or might* in requests

INTENTION

Use *will / shall*:

I'll have another cup of coffee.

Use the contracted form, not *will or shall* (except in formal writing)

OBLIGATION

Use **have / has to or must**:

She has to get more than 12 to pass the exam.

You must be more careful in future.

The difference between **have / has to** and **must** is unimportant **only** in affirmative sentences. Use **had to** for the past and **will have to** for the future

PROHIBITION

Use **must not**:

You mustn't touch that, it's dangerous.

If you use **don't have to** here you are **wrong**

NO OBLIGATION

Use negative forms of **has / have to**:

She doesn't have to work on Saturdays.

We didn't have to show our passports at the frontier.

With the new technology, you won't have to wait so long.

Needn't or don't / doesn't need to can often be used in a similar way:

You needn't wash the dishes. There's a dishwasher.

DEDUCTION

Use **must, may, might, could or can't**:

They must know each other because they work together.

Looking for Jimmy? He may / might / could be in the cafe.

He can't have finished already! He's only just started.

POSSIBILITY

Use **may, might, could**:

The weather may / might / could be better tomorrow.

ADVICE

Use **should or ought to**:

You shouldn't worry so much.

You ought to see a doctor.

*Hotel guests should leave the rooms before 12 o'clock. (a formal notice; **ought to** is not possible here)*

Exercise 1

Match the sentences below with the correct concepts.

ability	advice	deduction	intention	no obligation	obligation
offer	permission	possibility	prohibition	request	suggestion

1. She can play the piano well. _____
2. Shall we go to the cinema tonight? _____
3. It's free, so you don't have to pay. _____
4. They can't be in bed already, it's only 9 o'clock. _____
5. You have to keep quiet in here. _____
6. Could you give me some information? _____
7. We may have a picnic if it's sunny. _____

8. You mustn't drink and drive. _____
9. Shall I take your suitcase for you? _____
10. You can leave work early today. _____
11. I'll repay you the money tomorrow. _____
12. You should get more exercise. _____

Exercise 2

Fill the gaps with the correct words.

1. If all goes as planned, the product be launched in a couple of years.
a) must
b) could
c) shall
d) have to
2. I'm sorry. You have received the payment last month.
a) will
b) can
c) should
d) ought
3. The accountant said she would to explain the discrepancy.
a) try
b) to try
c) trying
d) tried
4. The city's finances are healthy, so it raise taxation.
a) don't have to
b) won't have
c) needn't
d) hasn't
5. you see yourself as a CEO one day?
a) Could
b) May
c) Should
d) Must
6. If we make an improved bid, we should to acquire the company.
a) be able
b) must
c) capable
d) can
7. The successful candidate be announced next September.
a) will

- b) would
- c) might have
- d) have to

8. Business is so good that we take any orders from new customers.

- a) mustn't
- b) won't
- c) shan't
- d) can't

9. I'm afraid I be present for the weekly progress meeting today.

- a) can't
- b) couldn't
- c) shouldn't
- d) haven't

10. A promotion, a higher salary and fewer responsibilities! Who want to be like him?

- a) shouldn't
- b) wouldn't
- c) couldn't
- d) mustn't

11. We haven't decided whether we postpone the event or cancel it completely.

- a) mustn't
- b) can't
- c) has to
- d) should

12. Drivers take an alternative route while the maintenance work is being done.

- a) will be able to
- b) able to
- c) enabled to
- d) are able

13. Yesterday's flights to San Francisco to be diverted because of fog.

- a) must
- b) would
- c) should
- d) had

14. We will happy to give you a tour of our new manufacturing facility.

- a) Ø
- b) be
- c) being
- d) been

15. We hope the office renovations be finished within the next month.

- a) could
- b) must
- c) will
- d) would

16. Interns can be by senior staff.

- a) train
- b) trains
- c) training
- d) trained

17. You look awful!. You really ought see a doctor.

- a) Ø
- b) to
- c) have
- d) be

18. you help me with the budget report this afternoon please?

- a) May
- b) Should
- c) Could
- d) Must

19. you require any assistance, please contact my secretary.

- a) May
- b) Might
- c) Should
- d) Would

20. Have you seen my briefcase? I may it in the office.

- a) leave
- b) left
- c) have left
- d) had left

to launch a product – to put it on the market

an accountant – a person whose profession is accountancy

a discrepancy – an error, a difference between the result obtained and the correct result

to raise taxation – to increase or put up taxation

CEO – Chief Executive Officer, the highest executive in a company

a bid – an offer to buy a company

an order – a request for a product or service to be supplied

to postpone – to reschedule or put back to a later date

fog – a weather condition which makes visibility difficult

interns – trainees, usually young people acquiring work experience

a briefcase – a case for containing business documents