
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute Grammar

Talking about the future



BBC
LEARNING
ENGLISH

This is not a word-for-word transcript

Catherine

Hello, and welcome to 6 Minute Grammar with me, Catherine.

Finn

And me, Finn. Hello.

Catherine

And today we're talking about six different ways of talking about the future – like **will** and **be going to**.

Finn

We can also use the **present simple** and **continuous** tenses, and we're also going to share a couple of other ways as well...

Catherine

That's right and as usual; there'll be a quiz at the end to test what you've learned. So let's get started. First, we'll look at **will** and **be going to**. They're both very common, and a lot of the time they're used in a similar way, to talk about predictions. But not always. So – let's hear an example of **be going to** – Finn, a question for you: what's for dinner tonight?

Finn

Hmmm... **I'm going to cook** my favourite meal.

Catherine

I know what that is.

Finn

That's curry! I've got all the ingredients already. And you, Catherine? What about you?

Catherine

Well, I haven't made any plans – **I'll** probably just have something simple... like tomato soup.

Finn

Ooh, sounds yummy.

Catherine

Yeah. So - Finn is **going to** cook curry. He already knew his plan at the time of speaking. It's his intention – or his plan – to cook curry. And we often use **be going to** in this way.

Finn

And Catherine – what did you say about tomato soup, again?

Catherine

I said... I'll probably have something simple... like tomato soup.

Finn

Yes, so Catherine used **I'll** or **will, I will** – but she made her decision at the time of speaking – so this is one of the main differences between **will** and **going to**. Ok, so we have four more ways of talking about the future to look at....

Catherine

We do and we have to talk some more about your curry, Finn, at this point. So **are you eating** alone?

Finn

No, I'm **eating** with a couple of friends.

Catherine

Aha! Now this time my question and Finn's answer are both in the **present continuous** – but we're using the present continuous to talk about the future. We use the present continuous for arrangements like this – so Finn has arranged to eat with friends.

Finn

Yes. I'm **eating** with friends. And you know, we could also use **be going to** for this as well, but not will. So I could say: I'm **going to eat** with a couple of friends.

Catherine

So that's three ways, and now there's another present tense we can use to talk about the future and that's the **present simple**. So curry time again, Finn.

Finn

Let's talk about curry!

Catherine

When are your friends coming to dinner?

Finn

Well, my friends are passing through London on a very tight schedule. So they **arrive** at the station at 5pm, we **eat** dinner at 6pm, and they **leave** on a plane at 9pm the same night!

Catherine

How exciting! And that conveniently demonstrates why we use the present simple for future events – we use it to talk about timetables. Your friends **arrive** at the station at 5pm, we **eat** dinner at 6pm, and they **leave** on a plane at 9pm the same night. And these are all things that are planned to happen at specific times.

Finn

Right. Now Catherine, it's your turn to use our next form – **be about to** – to talk about your dinner plans, OK?

Catherine

Yes. I'm **about to** say something about tomato soup.

Finn

OK, you're about to. OK, very good, very clever.

Catherine

Yes. So we use **be about to**, for things in the very near future. And **be about to** is followed by the base form of a verb. So the film **is about to** start. Or the train **is about to** leave, things like that.

Finn

Great! So we've now looked at five ways of talking about the future. What about the sixth?

Catherine

Well, the sixth way isn't actually a tense, it's not even a phrase – it's just a group of normal everyday verbs. And now it's time to bring in Callum who's been waiting patiently. Listen carefully for the verbs that Callum uses to talk about the future.

Callum

I **plan** to do evening classes in coding.

I **aim** to finish all the preparation by 8pm.

Wang Chun **intends** to move to Berlin.

We've **arranged** to meet in person next spring.

She **decided** to take the money.

Catherine

Good. So we heard **plan, aim, intend, arrange** and **decide**. In fact, lots of verbs can be used like this – followed by **to** and **the base form of a verb** – to talk about the future. So listen out for them! Oh, and thank you Callum.

Callum

You're welcome.

IDENT

6 Minute Grammar, from BBC Learning English.

Catherine

And now, it's quiz time! Question one. If you've already made a plan to visit France, which is better? a) I will travel to France this year or b) I'm going to travel to France this year?

Finn

The answer is b) I'm going to travel to France this year. Number two. Which is correct? a) We're about to get married next summer or b) We plan to get married next summer.

Catherine

And the correct answer is b) We plan to get married next summer.

Finn

And that's the end of the quiz. Well done if you got all those right.

Catherine

Well done indeed and it's also the end of the show. There's more about this on our website at bbclearningenglish.com. Join us again for more 6 Minute Grammar.

Both

Bye!

Summary

- 1) We use **will** for statements about the future, and for **predictions** about the future. It often expresses the future as fact – so it's used for very strong opinions or predictions. It can also be used for **instant decisions** made at the time of speaking.

*In 100 years' time, everyone **will have** an electric car.*

- 2) **Be going to** is used for present situations that extend into the future, or for something you want to do. There is often present evidence for the prediction.

*The government **is going to raise** fuel taxes.*

- 3) The **present continuous** is used for arrangements. It's very similar to going to for intention.

*I'm **cooking** for six guests next week.*

- 4) The **present simple** is used for timetabled events.

*The meal **starts** at six.*

- 5) In addition, we can use **be about to** talk about that will happen in the near future. It's followed by a base form of the verb.

*Quick, the film **is about to start!***

*We're **about to leave**. Get on the bus.*

- 6) Some normal verbs also indicate plans and intentions for the future. They're used with the infinitive + to:

*I **plan** to do evening classes in coding.*

*I **aim** to finish all the preparation by 8pm.*

*Wang Chun **intends** to move to Berlin.*

*We've **arranged** to meet in person next spring.*

*She **decided** to take the money.*