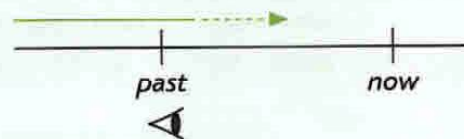


The future seen from the past

A

There are a number of ways of talking about an activity or event that was in the future at a particular point in the past. In order to express this idea, we can use the past tenses of the verb forms we would normally use to talk about the future. These forms are often used in reporting (see Units 32–36). Compare the following sentences:



<i>The future from now ...</i>	<i>The future from the past ...</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> I haven't got much money, so I think I'll stay at home this summer.	<input type="checkbox"/> Eleni decided that she would stay at home for the summer.
<input type="checkbox"/> I'm not going to say anything about the exams today, because I don't have time.	<input type="checkbox"/> I wasn't going to say anything about the exams, but the students asked me to.
<input type="checkbox"/> I'm having a meeting with my tutor tomorrow to discuss my work.	<input type="checkbox"/> I couldn't go to the match because I was having a meeting with my tutor.
<input type="checkbox"/> Will you be going alone, or is Louise going with you?	<input type="checkbox"/> At the time, I thought I would be going alone, but then Jan said he wanted to come.
<input type="checkbox"/> The exam will have finished by three o'clock, so I'll see you then.	<input type="checkbox"/> The exam was so easy that most people would have finished after 30 minutes.
<input type="checkbox"/> There is to be a meeting of ministers this evening.	<input type="checkbox"/> It was announced that there was to be a meeting of ministers that evening.
<input type="checkbox"/> When the school closes, all the children are to be moved to one nearby.	<input type="checkbox"/> Mrs Novak heard that she was to be moved to a post in a nearby school.
<input type="checkbox"/> As the bell is about to go for the end of the lesson, pack your books away.	<input type="checkbox"/> The bell was about to go when all the children started to pack their books away.

If the future seen from the past is still in the future for the speaker, then either form is possible:

- It was announced this morning that there **is / was to be** a statement this evening.

In some cases we don't know whether the activity or event happened or not. Compare:

- I didn't phone to give him the news because we **were seeing** each other later. He was very upset when I told him. (= we saw each other) *and*
- We **were seeing** each other later that day, but I had to phone and cancel. (= we didn't see each other)

B

To talk about an activity or event that was in the future at a particular point in the past, we can use **was / were to + infinitive** (for things that actually happened) and **was / were to have + past participle** (for things that were expected, but didn't happen):

- At the time she was probably the best actor in the theatre company, but in fact some of her colleagues **were to become** much better known.
- The boat, which **was to have taken** them to the island, failed to arrive.
- He **was to find out** years later that the car he had bought was stolen.

Note, however, that in less formal contexts it is more natural to use **be supposed to**:

- I **was supposed to help**, but I was ill. (*more natural than* I was to have helped ...)

Exercises

14.1 Write ✓ if the italicised parts are correct. If they are wrong, correct them. (A)

- 1 I'm *going to do* the washing, but we'd run out of washing powder.
- 2 The concert tonight *would be* over by about 9:30. We could eat after that.
- 3 When we *were passing* Ivan's house, we thought we'd drop in and see him.
- 4 A: Where shall I hang my coat? B: Sorry, I thought Ella *will have shown* you. Over there.
- 5 The manager of Newtown United said that the team *is to be announced* at nine tomorrow.
- 6 The second half *was about to start*, so shall we go back to our seats now?
- 7 I knew that by the morning I *would be feeling* exhausted, but I just wanted to go dancing.
- 8 A: Where's Oliver? He *is supposed* to be here yesterday, and there's still no sign of him.
B: I'm *about to ask* the same question.
- 9 I didn't phone Ben this morning because I *was going to* see him when I've finished work.
- 10 DNA testing *was to be used* by police in the search for the missing Dublin schoolboy. His parents have welcomed the news.
- 11 We *are meeting* at seven in the Globe coffee bar. Can you be there, too?
- 12 We didn't expect that having a rabbit as a pet *will cause* so many problems.

In which *three* cases can we use either a past or present tense form in the italicised parts?

14.2 Choose the more appropriate option, (a) or (b), to complete these sentences. (B)

- 1 The meeting was to have taken place in the hall, ...
a but had to be cancelled at the last minute.
b and was well attended.
- 2 She was to have appeared with Heath Ledger in his last film...
a and was a tremendous success.
b but the part went to her sister.
- 3 Later, in Rome, I was to meet Professor Pearce ...
a and was very impressed by his knowledge of Italian culture.
b but he left before I got there.
- 4 The twenty police officers who were to have gone off duty at eight ...
a went to the Christmas party.
b had to remain in the police station.
- 5 It was to take 48 hours to get to Japan ...
a and we were exhausted when we arrived.
b but we managed to do it in only a day.
- 6 After the war he was to teach at London University ...
a but no money was available to employ him.
b for ten years.
- 7 The bridge was to have been completed this year ...
a but a number of accidents have led to delays.
b and is to be opened by the president next month.
- 8 The new road was to have a major impact on traffic in the busy town centre, ...
a making life much easier for commuters.
b but the crowded roads continued.
- 9 The construction of the cathedral was to have begun in 1650 ...
a and go on for over 80 years.
b but a shortage of labour delayed the start for a further 20 years.
- 10 We were to stay with Rodrigo in Lisbon ...
a many times before he moved to Madrid.
b but he moved to Madrid.