

## Will and be going to

Reminder → B1-B5

**A** We can use either **will** or **be going to** to talk about something that is planned, or something that we think is likely to happen in the future:

- We **will** study climate change in a later part of the course. (or We **are going to** study ...)
- Where **will** you stay in Berlin? (or Where **are you going to** stay ...?)
- The south of the city **won't** be affected by the power cuts. (or ... **isn't going to be** affected ...)

We often prefer **be going to** in informal contexts (see also D).

**B** We use **will** rather than **be going to** to make a prediction based on our opinion or experience:

- Why not come over at the weekend? The children **will** enjoy seeing you again.
- 'Shall I ask Lamar?' 'No, she **won't** want to be disturbed.'

We use **be going to** rather than **will** when we make a prediction based on some present evidence:

- The sky's gone really dark. There's **going to** be a storm.
- 'What's the matter with her?' 'It looks like she's **going to** faint.'

**C** To predict the future we often use **will** with **I bet** (informal), **I expect**, **I hope**, **I imagine**, **I reckon** (informal), **I think**, **I wonder** and **I'm sure**, and in questions with **think** and **reckon**:

- I imagine* the stadium **will** be full for the match on Saturday.
- That cheese smells awful. *I bet* nobody **will** eat it.
- When *do you think* you'll finish work?
- Do you reckon* he'll say yes?

**Be going to** can also be used with these phrases, particularly in informal contexts.

**D** We use **will** when we make a decision at the moment of speaking and **be going to** for decisions about the future that have already been made. Compare:

- I'll pick him up at eight. (an offer; making an arrangement now) *and*
- I'm **going to** collect the children at eight. (this was previously arranged)
- 'Pineapples are on special offer this week.' 'In that case, I'll buy two.' *and*
- When I've saved up enough money, I'm **going to** buy a smartphone.

However, in a formal style, we use **will** rather than **be going to** to talk about future events that have been previously arranged in some detail. Compare:

- Are you going to** talk at the meeting tonight? *and*
- The meeting **will** begin at 9 am. Refreshments **will** be available from 8:30 onwards.

**E** We can use **will** or **be going to** with little difference in meaning in the main clause of an **if-sentence** when we say that something (often something negative) is conditional on something else:

- You'll / You're **going to** knock that glass over if you're not careful.

When the future event does not depend on the action described in the **if-clause**, we use **be going to**, not **will**. This kind of sentence is mainly found in spoken English. Compare:

- I'm **going to** open a bottle of lemonade, if you want some. (= I'm going to open a bottle of lemonade. Do you want some?) *and*
- I'll open a bottle of lemonade if you want some. (= If you say you want some, I'll open it.)

However, we use **will**, not **be going to**, when the main clause refers to offers, requests, promises, etc. and ability:

- If Erik phones, I'll let you know. (= an offer; '..., I'm going to let you know' suggests 'I intend to let you know when Erik phones')
- If you look to your left, you'll see the lake. (= you'll be able to see; '... you're going to see ...' suggests 'I know this is what you can see when you look to your left')

and when one thing is the logical consequence of another:

- If you don't switch on the monitor first, the computer **won't** come on.

## Exercises

9.1 Correct or improve the sentences where necessary by changing the italicised will ('ll) forms to be going to forms. A-D

- 1 Have you seen Nadia recently? She *'ll have* another baby. *'s going to have*
- 2 The method is quite simple, and I'm sure it *will be* familiar to most of you already.
- 3 A: I can't come over during the day.  
B: *I'll see* you tomorrow evening, then.
- 4 Are these new skis yours? *Will you take up* skiing?
- 5 Wherever you go in Brazil, you *'ll find* the people very friendly.
- 6 Jamie says he *'ll be* a politician when he grows up – and he's only five years old!
- 7 It's getting very humid – we *'ll have* a thunderstorm.
- 8 I hear you *'ll sell* your car. How much do you want for it?
- 9 You can't play football in the garden. *I'll cut* the grass.
- 10 A: What's the matter with Paula?  
B: She says she *'ll be sick*.  
A: She *'ll feel* better with some fresh air.
- 11 A: I've been offered a new job in Munich, so *I'll leave* Camco.  
B: When *will you tell* your boss?  
A: I'm not sure. Perhaps *I'll try* to see him later today.
- 12 A: Did I tell you *I'll have* dinner with Karl on Thursday?  
B: But *we'll see* a film with Hamid on Thursday. You've known about it for weeks.  
A: Sorry. In that case, *I'll sort out* a different day with Karl.
- 13 A: Did you get the theatre tickets?  
B: No. I forgot all about them. *I'll book* them tomorrow.
- 14 A: We've got small, medium and large. What size do you want?  
B: *I'm going to have* a large one, please.
- 15 A: Shall I give Ian another ring?  
B: Yes, I expect he *'ll be* home by now.
- 16 A: What are those bricks for?  
B: *I'll build* a wall at the side of the garden.

9.2 Complete the sentences with will ('ll) or be going to and an appropriate verb. If both will and be going to are possible, write them both. E

- 1 If you want me to, I *'ll explain* how the equipment works.
- 2 If you want to help us, we ..... these trees at the bottom of the garden.
- 3 You ..... your back if you try to lift that box.
- 4 If I give you the money ..... you ..... me some oranges when you're out?
- 5 If you press the red button, the machine .....
- 6 I ..... Laura this weekend, if you'd like to come too.
- 7 He's been told that if he's late once more he .....
- 8 If you listen carefully, you ..... an owl in the trees over there.

