

When I do / When I've done

When and if

A

Study these examples:

What time will you phone me tomorrow?

I'll call you when I get home from work.



"I'll call you when I get home from work" is a sentence with two parts:

the main part: I'll call you
the when part: when I get home from work (tomorrow)

The time in the sentence is *future* (tomorrow), but we use a *present tense* (get) in the when part of the sentence.

We do not use *will* in the when part of the sentence:

- We'll go out when it stops raining. (*not* when it will stop)
- When you are in Los Angeles again, give us a call. (*not* When you will be)
- (*said to a child*) What do you want to be when you grow up? (*not* will grow)

The same thing happens after *while* / *before* / *after* / *as soon as* / *until* or *till*:

- I'm going to read a lot of books while I'm on vacation. (*not* while I will be)
- I'm going back home on Sunday. Before I go, I'd like to visit the museum.
- Wait here until (*or* till) I come back.

B

You can also use the *present perfect* (have done) after *when* / *after* / *until* / *as soon as*:

- Can I borrow that book when you've finished it?
- Don't say anything while Ben is here. Wait until he has gone.

It is often possible to use the *simple present* or the *present perfect*:

- I'll come as soon as I finish. *or* I'll come as soon as I've finished.
- You'll feel better after you have something to eat. *or* You'll feel better after you've had something to eat.

But do not use the present perfect if two things happen together. The present perfect shows that one thing will be complete before the other (so the two things do not happen together).

Compare:

- When I've called Kate, we can have dinner.
(= First I'll call Kate, and after that we can have dinner.)

but When I call Kate this evening, I'll invite her to the party. (*not* When I've called)
(In this example, the two things happen together.)

C

After *if*, we normally use the simple present (do/see, etc.) for the future:

- It's raining hard. We'll get wet if we go out. (*not* if we will go)
- Hurry up! If we don't hurry, we'll be late.

Compare *when* and *if*:

We use *when* for things that are sure to happen:

- I'm going shopping this afternoon. (for sure) When I go shopping, I'll buy some food.

We use *if* (*not* when) for things that will possibly happen:

- I might go shopping this afternoon. (it's possible) If I go shopping, I'll buy some food.
- Don't worry if I'm late tonight. (*not* when I'm late)
- If they don't come soon, I'm not going to wait. (*not* When they don't come)

Exercises

24.1 Complete these sentences using the verbs in parentheses. All the sentences are about the future. Use *will/won't* or the simple present (*I see / he plays / it is, etc.*).

1. I *'ll call* _____ (call) you when I *get* _____ (get) home from work.
2. I want to see Jennifer before she _____ (go) out.
3. We're going on a trip tomorrow. I _____ (tell) you all about it when we _____ (come) back.
4. Brian looks very different now. When you _____ (see) him again, you _____ (not / recognize) him.
5. We should do something soon before it _____ (be) too late.
6. I don't want to go without you. I _____ (wait) until you _____ (be) ready.
7. Sue has applied for the job, but she isn't very well qualified for it. I _____ (be) surprised if she _____ (get) it.
8. I'd like to play tennis tomorrow if the weather _____ (be) nice.
9. I'm going out now. If anybody _____ (call) while I _____ (be) out, can you take a message?

24.2 Make one sentence from two.

1. You will be in Los Angeles again. Give us a call.
Give us a call _____ when *you are in Los Angeles again* _____.
2. I'll find a place to live. Then I'll give you my address.
I _____ when _____.
3. I'll do the shopping. Then I'll come straight home.
_____ after _____.
4. It's going to start raining. Let's go home before that.
_____ before _____.
5. She has to apologize to me first. I won't speak to her until then.
_____ until _____.

24.3 Read the situations and complete the sentences.

1. A friend of yours is going to visit Hong Kong. You want to know where she is going to stay. You ask:
Where are you going to stay when *you are in Hong Kong* _____?
2. A friend of yours is visiting you. She has to leave soon, but you'd like to show her some pictures. You ask:
Do you have time to look at some pictures before _____?
3. Your friend is reading the newspaper. You'd like to read it next. You ask:
Could I have the newspaper when _____?
4. You want to sell your car. Jim is interested in buying it, but he hasn't decided yet. You ask:
Can you let me know as soon as _____?

24.4 Put in *when* or *if*.

1. Don't worry *if* _____ I'm late tonight.
2. Chris might call while I'm out this evening. _____ he does, can you take a message?
3. I'm going to Tokyo next week. _____ I'm there, I hope to visit a friend of mine.
4. I think Beth will get the job. I'll be very surprised _____ she doesn't get it.
5. I'm going shopping. _____ you want anything, I can get it for you.
6. I'm going away for a few days. I'll call you _____ I get back.
7. I want you to come to the party, but _____ you don't want to come, that's all right.
8. We can eat at home or, _____ you prefer, we can go to a restaurant.