Lesson 4 – Mixed Future Tenses (Part 1)

Talking about the future in English can get a little complicated, because we have at least seven different ways to do it:

1. **WILL**
   
   *I’ll call you tomorrow.*

2. **GOING TO**
   
   *I’m going to buy a new computer soon.*

3. **PRESENT SIMPLE**
   **(FOR FUTURE)**
   
   *Our flight leaves at 8:30 Friday morning.*

4. **PRESENT CONTINUOUS**
   **(FOR FUTURE)**
   
   *I’m getting together with my friends this weekend.*

5. **FUTURE CONTINUOUS**
   
   *We’ll be staying in New York for a week in July.*

6. **FUTURE PERFECT**
   
   *By December, I will have sold my car.*

7. **FUTURE PERFECT CONTINUOUS**
   
   *As of next week, I will have been living in this house for five years.*

Instead of studying each type of future tense in isolation, this lesson is organized by the types of situations when talking about the future – because in some cases, more than one option is possible. Today we’ll cover four future situations, and we’ll finish the rest of them in tomorrow’s lesson. Remember to respond to the "Put it into Practice" questions!
Situation #1 - PREDICTIONS

When making **predictions**, **projections**, and other **guesses** about the future, it's possible to use **will** or **going to**.

- I think the economy **will** improve this year.
  = I think the economy's **going to** improve this year.
- Your father **won't** be happy when he finds out what you've done.
  = Your father's **not going to** be happy when he finds out what you've done.

**Put it into practice!**

Make two predictions about two things that you think will happen in your country during the next five years. Use "will/won't" for one prediction, and "going to / not going to" for the other prediction.

1. will / won't
2. going to / not going to

Some teachers say that **going to** is more certain than **will**, and here's why: when making a prediction based on some **immediate present evidence** that we can observe right in front of us, we usually prefer to use **going to**:

- The sky is getting dark and I just heard some thunder - it's **going to** rain.
- I'm not feeling well. I feel like I'm **going to** throw up.
- Gina's **not going to** win the race - the other runners are far ahead of her.
- We're **not going to** have enough paint to finish this wall.

As you might have noticed, in fast spoken English, **going to** is pronounced **gonna**, and **not going to**, **not gonna**.

Predictions often start with **I think**, **I bet**, **I'm sure**, **I imagine**, **I expect**, and **I hope**. There is one detail with "I think" - when making predictions about something
that will NOT happen, we usually say I don't think... will/going to and not I think... won't/not going to:

- I don't think the current president will be re-elected.
- I don't think the current president is going to be re-elected.
- I think the current president won't be re-elected.
- I think the current president isn't going to be re-elected.

It’s better to put the negative in front of think.

**Situation #2A – Plans & Arrangements**

When talking about plans that we have already arranged – we have already taken some action to make the future plan a reality – we can say it in three different ways.

Imagine you are going on vacation next week, and you have made a reservation in a five-star hotel.

You could use either going to, future continuous, or present continuous for the future:

- I'm going to stay at a five-star hotel next week.
- I'll be staying at a five-star hotel next week.
- I'm staying at a five-star hotel next week.
- I will stay at a five-star hotel next week.

Here’s another example. Let’s say you want to meet your friend Larry for some drinks after work tomorrow. You have already called him and agreed to meet at the bar at 6 PM. Then you could say:

- I'm going to meet up with Larry at the bar tomorrow evening.
- I'll be meeting up with Larry at the bar tomorrow evening.
- I'm meeting up with Larry at the bar tomorrow evening.

When using the last option, the present continuous for future use, we usually include the specific time in the future (to avoid confusion with “actions happening at the moment”):
I'm taking an intensive English course.  
*(right now, at this moment; the course is currently in progress)*

I'm taking an intensive English course **next month.**  
*(in the future)*

I'm picking up my kids from school.  
*(right now, at this moment; I am currently doing this)*

I'm picking up my kids from school **at 3.**  
*(spoken in the morning, before 3 PM; the action is still in the future)*

**Put it into practice!**

Take a moment to look at or think about your agenda for the next few weeks or months. Say three things that are on your agenda:

1. I'm **going to**...
2. I'll be **_____ing**...
3. I'm **_____ing**...

**Situation #2B – Intentions / Goals**

When you have a future **intention** or **goal** (but which is not a confirmed, scheduled arrangement on your calendar), it’s best to use **going to:**

- I’m **going to** read more books.
- I’m **going to** start doing some volunteer work.
- I’m **not going to** eat so much junk food this year.
- I’m **not going to** buy that TV; it’s just too expensive.

You can also use phrases like **I hope to**, **I'd like to**, **I'm planning to / I'm planning on**, **I might**, **I'm thinking about**, and **I'm considering** to talk about future intentions or possible future goals. See this lesson for some examples.

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Put it into practice!

Imagine it's January 1 and you are making your New Year's resolutions. Say one thing you intend to do, and one thing you do NOT intend to do:

- This year, I'm going to...
- This year, I'm not going to...

Situation #3 – Promises, Offers & Decisions in the Moment

For promises, offers, and decisions made in the moment of speaking, we always use will/won't:

Decisions made in the moment:

- *Ordering at a restaurant:*
  - I’ll have the salmon with a side order of vegetables.
- *While shopping:*
  - "These T-shirts are on sale."
  - "In that case, I'll buy three."

Offers & Promises:

- I'll help you with your homework.
- We’ll give you a ride to the train station.
- I'll call you at 5:00.
- I'll always love you.
- I won't let you down.

Put it into practice!

#1 - Imagine that your best friend is very sick and can't leave the house. Make her two offers for things that you can do to help her.

- I'll...
#2 - Imagine that you've just had a big fight with your boyfriend/girlfriend. Now you are making up, and you want to promise one thing you WILL do in the future and one thing you WON'T do anymore.

- I'll...
- I won't...

**What about "shall"?**

In the past, *shall* was a more formal alternative to *will*. In British English, *shall* is supposed to be used with *I/we*, and *will* is supposed to be used in all other cases. In American English, *shall* is not commonly used.

Here are a few places where it is occasionally used - although again, these all sound very "formal." The more common forms of the phrases appear below *italicized in blue*:

**Giving & requesting suggestions with *I/we*:**

- **Shall** we start the meeting?
  
  *Should* we start the meeting?

- **Shall** I open the window?
  
  *Should* I open the window?

- Where **shall** we go today?
  
  *Where should* we go today?

**Offers/promises with *I/we*:**

- I **shall** make the necessary arrangements.
  
  *I will* make the necessary arrangements.

- We **shall** send you the information by Friday.
  
  *We will* send you the information by Friday.

- We **shall** not tolerate this injustice.
  
  *We will not (won't)* tolerate this injustice.

**Formal / legal language - obligation/requirement:**
• All employees **shall** wear uniforms to work.
  *All employees **must** wear uniforms to work.*
• Students **shall not** enter the faculty lounge for any reason.
  *Students **must not** enter the faculty lounge for any reason.*

**Situation #4 – Scheduled / Regular Events**

We use the present simple for “scheduled events” in the future:

**Transportation schedules**
*(flights, trains, etc.)*
*Our flight leaves at 8:00.*

**Conferences and events**
*(meetings, lectures, classes)*
*The conference starts next Thursday.*

**Things that operate on a regular schedule** *(bank or store opening / closing, etc.)*
*The supermarket closes in 15 minutes.*
*My favorite TV show is on tonight.*

These are different from “plans and arrangements” because in general, they are things we have no control over. They are simply scheduled on an official calendar – and we use the present simple for them, even though they are in the future.

**Summary**

• For predictions about the future, use **will** or **going to** (use **going to** with immediate present evidence)
• For plans and arrangements, use **going to**, **future continuous**, or **present continuous**
• For goals and intentions, use **going to**
• For promises, offers, and decisions made at the moment of speaking, use **will**
• For scheduled, regular events, use the **present simple**
• **Shall** is not very common anymore, but it can be used with suggestions, offers, and promises with I/we, as well as in formal/legal writing
You’ve finished Lesson 4! Now take the quiz and do the practice exercises to review the future tenses you learned in today’s lesson. Tomorrow, we’ll continue our study by looking at some more future situations.

Quiz – Lesson 4 – Mixed Future Tenses (Part 1)

1. My summer vacation starts / will start June 15. I'm going to / I will visit my grandparents in Florida.
2. Don’t worry, I don’t make / won’t make the same mistake again.
3. I take / I'm taking the day off tomorrow, so I'll get / I'm going to get back to you on Wednesday, OK?
4. After I finish this book, I read / I'm going to read the next one in the series.
5. I prepare / I'll prepare the salad while you make the soup.
6. I'm bored... I don't know what to do. Maybe I'll take / I'll be taking a walk.
7. I want to be a happier person, so I've decided that I'm not going to complain / I won't be complaining about the little things.
8. Paula says she's going to lose / she's losing 20 pounds by the end of the year. She's very determined!
9. Randy speaks / Randy's speaking at the international event in September.
10. Scientists say that climate change will be having / will have serious consequences for the planet.
11. She's going to have / She will have twins next month - her belly is huge!
12. The exam is probably taking / will probably take about an hour to finish.
13. What are you doing / will you do this weekend?
14. I have a dentist appointment on the 23rd. I'll get / I'll be getting my teeth whitened.
15. “My class ends / is ending at 4:30.”
   "In that case, I'll / I'm going to pick you up at quarter to five."
Writing Task

Write about your short- and long-term goals and dreams for the next 10 years. What do you hope to accomplish? What steps are you planning to take to get there?

E-mail me your text at shayna@espressoenglish.net – and I'll review it and send you back my comments.
Answers – Lesson 4 – Mixed Future Tenses (Part 1)

1. My summer vacation **starts** June 15. **I'm going to** visit my grandparents in Florida.
2. Don’t worry, I **won't make** the same mistake again.
3. **I'm taking** the day off tomorrow, so **I'll get** back to you on Wednesday, OK?
4. After I finish this book, **I'm going to read** the next one in the series.
5. **I'll prepare** the salad while you make the soup.
6. I’m bored... I don’t know what to do. Maybe **I'll take** a walk.
7. I want to be a happier person, so I’ve decided that **I'm not going to complain** about the little things.
8. Paula says **she's going to lose** 20 pounds by the end of the year. She’s very determined!
9. **Randy's speaking** at the international event in September.
10. Scientists say that climate change **will have** serious consequences for the planet.
11. **She's going to have** twins next month - her belly is huge!
12. The exam **will probably take** about an hour to finish.
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   "In that case, **I'll** pick you up at quarter to five."