



Worksheet: Talking About the Future

Read the detailed explanation of English “future talk” below. Then read the comic strip examples of “future talk” in context. Finally, write your own sentences about the future, using all 6 future-related tenses and all 13 uses of the tenses.

In English, the future tense is more flexible than the past or present tenses. What I mean by “flexible” is that there are many more ways to describe the future, compared to the past and present. You can describe the future with six different tenses instead of four. And there are 13 total uses for the tenses that describe future. The future is so flexible in English that you can even use two forms of the *present* tense to describe it.

All this flexibility is great. But it also means that mastering “future talk” is a bit more complicated than mastering “present talk” or “past talk” in English. Below, we’ll look closely at every tense in English that can describe the future.

Present Continuous

Form: Use a form of “to be” (am, is, are)+ verb + ing. (Am doing, is thinking, are trying, and so on.)

Uses:

Use 1: An action planned in the near future

EXAMPLES: The science fair **is happening** in the school auditorium this weekend. I **am seeing** the new movie this weekend.

Use 2: An expected future event. This is an event that is not necessarily planned by the speaker or writer, but is still something they expect will happen. While Use 1 of present continuous only deals with the near future, Use 2 can deal with events that will happen in near or distant future.

EXAMPLES: I think the research team **is finishing** its work sometime this evening. Some scientists believe the polar ice caps **are melting** completely within the next hundred years.

Simple Present

Form: Just use the base form of the verb, adding an “s” if the subject before the verb is singular. (They know, that woman knows, and so on.)

Uses:

Use 1: A scheduled future event. This is very similar to Use 1 of present continuous above. The difference is that Use 1 of present continuous usually describes events in the near future. In simple present can describe events in the near future or events that will happen a very long time from now.)

EXAMPLES: The wedding **is** next Monday. The millennium **ends** in the year 2999.

Simple Future

Form: Use will + the base form of the verb. (They will run, she will run, etc...)

Uses:

Use 1: A future event.

EXAMPLE: I **will see** you tomorrow.

Use 2: A prediction of what may happen in the future.

EXAMPLE: My grandfather thinks it **will rain** soon.

Use 3: A promise of future action

EXAMPLE: I **will finish** cleaning my room before I go to bed tonight.

Use 4: A request for future action

EXAMPLE: **Will** you **give** me the financial report before you go home today?

Use 5: A threat to do something bad in the near future

EXAMPLE: If you bother me again, I **will complain** to your boss.

Use 6: Describing an event that happens often, and will probably happen again in the future. (This one really describes actions that happen again and again, past present and future, and is not strictly a future form. Because it's a little different from other uses of simple future, I'll give you several examples.)

EXAMPLES: In Korea and Japan, it **will** always **rain** a lot in the summer. She loves comic books, so she **will talk** a lot if you ask her about comics. The car **will need** an oil change every four months. I **will** usually **take** a shower in the morning.

Future Perfect

Form: Will + have + past form of a verb. The past form of a verb is usually verb+ed, except in the case of irregular verbs, which may have other past forms. (Have given, have slept, have finished, etc...)

Uses:

*Use 1: Use future perfect when you want to say that an action will be completed at a specific time in the future. For instance, if you think you will be done studying for the TOEFL at the end of next month, you would say "I **will have finished** studying for the TOEFL at the end of next month." See below for a few more examples.*

EXAMPLES: He **will have slept** for five hours when his alarm clock goes off at 5am. The next time you see me, I **will have finished** my summer courses. In America, a president **will have ruled** for eight years by the time he finishes his second term and must leave office.

Future Perfect Continuous

Form: Will + have been + verb + ing. (Will have been thinking, will have been driving, etc..)

Uses:

Use 1: Use future perfect continuous to predict that an action will still be in progress at a specific time in the future. You must also describe how long the action will have taken at that point in the future.

*For example, suppose you will **not** be finished studying for the TOEFL by the end of next month (**next month = specific time in the future**). However, by the end of next month, you will be finished with six weeks of TOEFL study, even though you're not finished with all of your TOEFL study (**six weeks = how long the action will have taken at that point in the future**).*

*In this case, you could say "I **will have been studying** for the TOEFL for six weeks at the end of next month." This means that once you get to the end of next month, you have studied for six weeks, and you are continuing to study more.*

*This is somewhat like Use 1 of future perfect above. The difference is that future perfect is used to say that something will be **finished** at a specific point in the future. Future perfect continuous is used to describe something that will **still be happening** at a specific future time.*

EXAMPLES: He **will have been sleeping** for five hours by 5am, and he'll probably keep sleeping until at least 7am. The next time you see me, I **will have been taking** my summer courses for a few weeks. In America, a president **will have been ruling** for four years by the time he gets elected to a second term.

Future Continuous

Form: Will + be + verb + ing. (Will be running, will be trying, and so on.)

Uses:

Use 1: Describing a future event. This pretty much the same as Use 1 of Simple future, as seen above.

EXAMPLES: I **will be arriving** to work late tomorrow because I need to take my son to the doctor first. I **will be seeing** you next week.

*Use 2: Predicting an event that will still be in progress in the future. This is kind of like Use 1 of future perfect continuous, but much simpler. In future perfect continuous, you need to specify the future point in time and the duration of the future event. However, in future perfect, saying an event will be in progress in the future is the **only** thing you need to do. You can state specific times and specific durations of events, but you don't have to.*

EXAMPLES: When you get to their house, they **will be cooking** dinner. On Sunday, I **will be playing** video for a few hours. My father works very hard right now, but soon he **will be enjoying** his retirement.

A review of these tenses and uses in comic strip form starts on the next page.

Talking About the Future: Present Continuous and Simple Present Tense

by David Recine for Magoosh.com



- 1) An action planned in the near future
- 2) An expected future event
- 3) A scheduled future event

Talking About the Future: Future Continuous

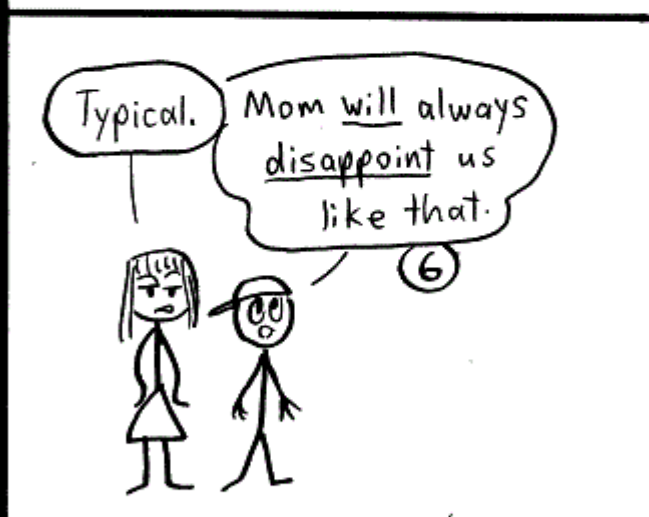
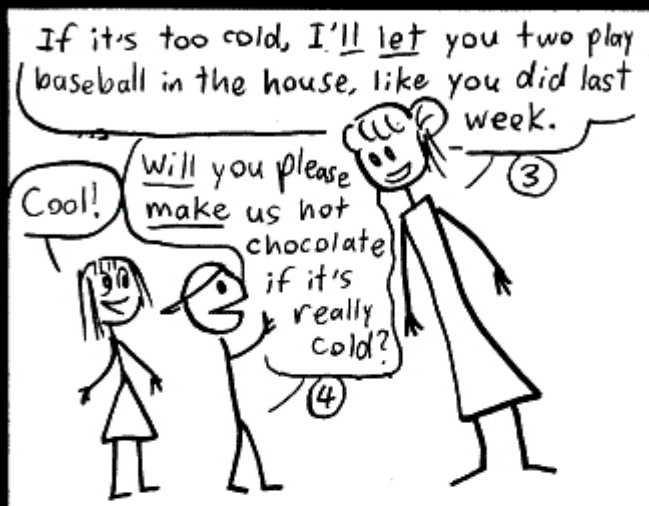
by David Recine for Magoosh.com



- 1) Describing a future event
- 2) Predicting an event that will still be in progress in the future

Talking About the Future: Simple Future Present

by David Recine for Magoosh.com



- 1) Describing a future event
- 2) A prediction of what may happen in the future
- 3) A promise of future action
- 4) A request
- 5) A threat to do something in the near future
- 6) Describing an event that happens often, and will probably happen again in the future

Talking About the Future: Future Perfect and Future Perfect Continuous Tense

by David Recine for Magoosh.com



1) Future perfect: Saying an action will be finished at a specific time in the future

2) Future perfect continuous: Predicting that an action will still be happening at a specific time in the future

Activity: Write your own original sentences using future talk, as described below.

- 1) Describe an action planned in the near future, using present continuous tense.
- 2) Describe an expected future event, using present continuous tense.
- 3) Describe a scheduled future event, using simple present tense.
- 4) Describe a future event, using simple future tense.
- 5) Make a prediction of something that will happen in the future, using simple future tense.
- 6) Make a promise of future action, using simple future tense.
- 7) Make a request for future action, using simple future tense.
- 8) Make a threat to do something bad in the near future, using simple future tense.
- 9) Describe an event that happens often, and will probably happen again in the future, using simple future tense.
- 10) Say that an action will be completed at a specific time in the future, using future perfect tense.
- 11) Predict that an action will still be continuing at a specific time in the future, using future perfect continuous tense.
- 12) Describe a future event, using future continuous tense.
- 13) Predict that an event will still be happening in the future, using future continuous tense.