

Talking about the future by Jessica Rundell

Age: Teenagers / Adults
Level: Pre-intermediate – Intermediate
Time: 60 minutes
Objectives: To learn about the various tenses used to talk about the future
Key skills: Grammar, speaking
Materials: One copy of the worksheet per student; one set of the pictures per group of three or four

Procedure

- Warmer – On the board, write a few questions about the future in general (e.g. *What do you think the world will be like in 50 years' time?*) and their own plans for the future (e.g. *What job are you going to do when you finish university?*). Tell students to discuss their answers in pairs. Monitor for uses of different future forms.
- Feed back and tell students that they're going to read some dialogues about the future. Give each student a copy of worksheet 1. Give students five minutes to read and complete Activity 1. Check the answers with the class.
Key: 1. a; 2. c; 3. b
- Ask students to read Activity 2 and then discuss the answers with a partner. Then, check the answers whole class. Or, if you prefer, complete Activity 2 together as a class.
Key: *dialogue 1 – The speakers know exactly what time the event will happen.; dialogue 2 – The speaker is quite certain that the event will happen, but not clear about an exact time.; dialogue 3 – The speakers are not sure if or when the event will happen.*
- Give students five minutes to re-read the dialogues and complete Activity 3. Feed back and elicit from the students what they know about when we use each of the ticked forms when talking about the future. (The following activities give them a chance to confirm their answers.)

Key:

tense	✓	example
past simple		
present simple	✓	starts finishes
present continuous	✓	are you doing I'm watching are you meeting we're meeting
will + infinitive	✓	I'll see we will go we will (go) I'll start
be going to + infinitive	✓	are you going to do are not going to support I'm going to fail
present perfect		

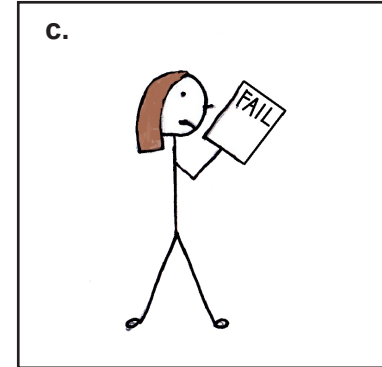
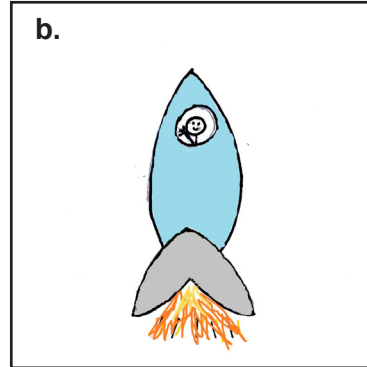
- Draw students' attention to Activity 4. Make sure they are clear about the meaning of *arrangement*, *prediction* and *present evidence*. Give them five to seven minutes to complete the activity and, then, another minute or two to compare their answers with a partner.
- Feed back and answer any questions that arise. Check students' understanding by asking them about other phrases in bold from the dialogues.
Key: 1. b; 2. a; 3. d; 4. c; 5. e; 6. f
- Give students five to seven minutes to complete the rules in Activity 5 and check with a partner. Feed back and ensure students understand the rules.
Key: 1. will + infinitive; 2. be going to + infinitive; 3. the present continuous; 4. the present simple; 5. be going to + infinitive; 6. will + infinitive
- Give students five to seven minutes to complete Activity 6. Check all students have the correct answers and, then, put them into pairs to ask and answer questions.
Key: 1. are you doing; 2. Are you going to watch; 3. there will be; 4. it's going to rain; 5. Are you going to travel; 6. does this class finish

9. Put students into groups of three or four. Give each group a set of the six pictures. Tell them to write a sentence to go with each picture. Advise them to refer back to descriptions a to f in Activity 4 and the rules in Activity 5. Each sentence should match one of the descriptions. If they are struggling, give an example sentence for one of the pictures.

Suggested sentences for pictures: *Katie is having lunch with Sue on Wednesday. (definite arrangement); The exam starts at 12.00. / The exam starts in five minutes. (timetabled event); I'll get the next bus (because this one is full). (decision made at the time of speaking); Larry thinks there will be robot waiters in 2050 / waiters will serve us in the future. (prediction in general); When I grow up, I'm going to be a doctor. (planned intention); I'm going to be late for work! (prediction based on present evidence)*

Optional extension task: Groups draw their own future pictures and get others in the class to guess their sentences.

1. Match pictures a to c to dialogues 1 to 3.



1. Two friends, Craig and Kevin, are talking on the phone.

Kevin Hi, Craig. What **are you doing** later?

Craig I'm **watching** football at the pub with my brother. Do you want to join us?

Kevin Yeah, that sounds great. What time **are you meeting**?

Craig **We're meeting** at 7.15 and the match **starts** at 7.30.

Kevin Great! I'll **see** you at 7.15, then. Bye!

2. Laura is talking to her mum.

Mum Your course **finishes** this summer. What **are you going to do** after you graduate?

Laura I'm not sure yet ...

Mum Well, you need to find a job. Your father and I **are not going to support** you forever.

Laura I know Mum, but the truth is ... I'm **not going to graduate** this year. I haven't been to any classes this term, so I'm pretty sure I'm **going to fail** the exam.

3. Greg is talking to his five-year-old son, Jake.

Jake Daddy, do you think that **we will go** on holiday to the moon one day?

Greg Maybe **we will**, Jake; but not for at least another fifty years. Do you want to try it?

Jake Yes, please!

Greg Then I'll **start** saving money now!

2. Are the speakers in Activity 1 sure if / when each of these events will happen?

3. Look at the words in bold in the dialogues. Tick the different tenses that you see and give one example of each.

tense	✓	example
past simple		
present simple		
present continuous		
<i>will</i> + infinitive		
<i>be going to</i> + infinitive		
present perfect		

4. Match phrases 1 to 6 from the dialogues to descriptions a to f.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. We're meeting at 7.15. | a. a timetabled event |
| 2. The match starts at 7.30. | b. a definite arrangement for the future |
| 3. I'll see you at 7.15. | c. a planned intention (decision already made) |
| 4. Your father and I are not going to support you forever. | d. a decision made at the time of speaking |
| 5. I'm going to fail the exam. | e. a prediction based on present evidence |
| 6. We will go on holiday to the moon one day. | f. a prediction in general |

5. Fill the gaps to complete the rules. You need to use some words twice.

be going to + infinitive
the present continuous

the present simple
will + infinitive

- When we talk about future predictions in general, we use _____(1), but, when we base our prediction on present evidence, we use _____(2).
- When we have made an arrangement (for example, organized to meet someone at a certain time), we use _____(3), but, when something is happening that is not our decision (for example, train times or the time a film starts at the cinema), we use _____(4).
- When we just have a general plan or we have already decided to do something in the future, we use _____(5).
- When we make a spontaneous decision to do something (meaning we make the decision at the time we are speaking), we use _____(6).

6. Select the correct form from the words in bold. Then, ask your partner the questions.

1. What **are you doing** / **will you do** after class today?
2. **Are you going to watch** / **Do you watch** TV this evening? Which programmes?
3. Do you think that there **are going to be** / **will be** flying cars in the future?
4. When the weather forecast says **it's going to rain** / **it rains**, do you change your plans or just take an umbrella?
5. **Will you travel** / **Are you going to travel** next summer? Where?
6. What time **does this class finish** / **is this class finishing**?

