

# Be going to and present continuous

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## Abstract

This video explains how to use the **two forms of the future** that students often know the least: **be going to** and **present continuous**. We use them to talk about our **intentions** and **plans**. We also can use be going to to make **predictions** about the future, which are based on **observations** in the present.

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## Script

Hello, my name is Catherine and today we're going to talk about the future. Students often associate will with the future and forget about the other two forms: be going to and present continuous.

But these two forms are actually used more often because we use them to talk about our plans and our intentions. We form be going to using the subject plus to be plus be going to and the base form of the verb.

Take for example the following two sentences:

"I am going to buy a new car on Saturday".

"I'm buying a new car on Saturday".

The first sentence expresses an intention. Yes, you want a new car but maybe you haven't decided what type of car. The second sentence expresses that you have already decided what type of car. For example: price, make, model and you're going to buy it on Saturday.

Now let's look at another example. Take these two sentences:

"I am going to learn how to ski".

"I'm starting skiing lessons in October".

Now the difference between these two sentences is more significant because the first sentence expresses an intention or maybe the speaker will never learn how to ski. Instead, the second sentence expresses a fixed plan: the student has already organized his lessons.

Lastly let's look at how we use "be going to" to make predictions about the future. Let's talk about Paul doesn't do his homework. Paul doesn't study. His mother is very angry. She said to Paul: "Paul you're going to fail your exam".

Paul's mother uses observation in the present to make a prediction about the future. Here's another example. If you look at the blue sky with no clouds you could say: "It isn't going to rain. It's sunny day!"

You do not use the present continuous for predictions, only "be going to".

That's all for now. Bye, bye.

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## Keys

How many forms can be used to talk about the future?

- a) Only one: will
- b) Two: be going to and present continuous
- c) **Three: will, be going to and present continuous**
- d) Infinite

What do we use be going to and present continuous for?

- a) **Plans and intentions**
- b) Orders
- c) Suggestions
- d) Apologies

What does the sentence "I'm starting skiing lessons in October" express?

- a) An intention
- b) A regret: the speaker has never learnt how to ski
- c) **A fixed plan: the speaker has already organized his lessons**
- d) A prediction

Which form cannot be used to make predictions about the future?

- a) Be going to and present continuous
- b) Will
- c) Be going to
- d) **Present continuous**

## Teaching tips

Contextualization: to help students to **communicate effectively**, it's important to let them use their **own everyday experience**. In the following activities the students are encouraged to speak about **meaningful situations** in real life. The **first activity** is based on **personalization**. In the **second activity** the students have to **choose a tense that is more probably right** in different sentences.

### 1. Personalization

The students are paired up. Student tells his/her partner about one of his/her plans or arrangements and the other student will predict something about it. The teacher can tell them how accurate she/he thinks this prediction is.

#### Example

"I'm going to move to Norway"

"You'll love the weather"

"I don't think so/Actually, I hate the cold"

**Possible topic:** cinema, shopping/purchases, eating out, travel, weekend, birthday and other celebrations.

**Possible predictions:** success/failure, feelings, length of time, amount of money, conversations

### 2. Choosing the right tense

Students are given a list of future events, each of which could be an arrangement, a plan or just a thing that they can predict. Students pick one and guess whether their partner already has an arrangement or a plan, or can only make a prediction. After their partner has confirmed which one it is, they then try to make a true sentence in the right tense.

#### Example

"You are having your uncle's retirement party this weekend" (if it's an arrangement)

"Your uncle is going to have a retirement party this year" (if it's plan)

"Your family will probably arrange a surprise party for him" (if it's prediction).

**Possible topic:** birthday party, retirement, exercise, window shopping, concerts, holidays.