

Future Continuous - Use

When do we use the future continuous tense in English?

Note: This is also called the **future progressive** tense.

As a general rule, we use the **future continuous** to talk about temporary actions that will be in progress sometime in the future.

! We do not usually use stative verbs (*know, like, own, etc.*) in the future continuous.

For example:

- This time tomorrow we'll know the answer. (Not: ~~we'll be knowing~~)
- Next year I'll have my own house. (Not: ~~I'll be having~~)

We use the future continuous for:

1. Actions that will be in progress at a specific point in the future

The action usually starts before that time and might continue after that time. You can state the specific point with a time word or phrase (e.g. at 8 am, this time next week) or with a phrase starting with **when** (e.g. when I arrive, when the shop opens).

For example:

- At 10 tomorrow morning, I **will be working**.
- This time next week, we'll **be lying** on a beach.
- My parents **won't be living** there this time next year.
- Where **will you be waiting** when I arrive?

If you use the future simple here, it sounds like the action will start at that point.

Compare:

- When he arrives, we'll **eat**. (= He will arrive and then we will eat.)
- When he arrives, we'll **be eating**. (= We will start to eat and then he will arrive.)

2. Actions that will be in progress over a period of time in the future

For example:

- I'll **be cleaning** the house all day tomorrow.
- Over the next few weeks, we **will be preparing** for the exam.
- During the holidays, Rob **won't be working** at the hotel.
- What will **you be doing** this summer?

3. Actions that are expected to happen

We often use the future continuous when something is expected to happen as part of someone's schedule or routine. Unlike with rules 1 and 2, here we do not necessarily state a specific point or period of time in the future.

Note: We can also often use the present continuous in these types of sentences.

For example:

- I'll **be marking** the exams later today.
- They'll **be announcing** the winners soon.
- The kids **will be going** swimming this Saturday.
- She **won't be staying** here.

This often sounds more natural and less like a deliberate decision than the future simple.

Compare:

- I'll **call** Jess. (a decision/promise)
- I'll **be calling** Jess tomorrow. (an expected future activity)

4. Polite questions about someone's future plans

Like with rule 3, this is about expected activities. We can use the future continuous in questions to sound less direct and more polite.

For example:

- **Will you be using** the computer later?
- Which team **will you be playing** against?

We can often use the future simple here as well, but the future continuous makes it clear that we are just asking about a person's plans, and not making a request or asking about a decision.

Compare:

- **Will you cook** tonight? (can sound like a request)
- **Will you be cooking** tonight? (just asking about the person's plans)

! Although **need** and **want** are stative verbs, people sometimes use them in future continuous questions in formal contexts to sound polite. These types of questions are often used in service situations by waiters, receptionists, etc.

For example:

- **Will you be needing** anything else, sir?
- **Will you be wanting** to check out early?

5. Predictions

We can use the future continuous to predict an activity that we expect to be in progress.

For example:

- By the time we get there, everyone **will be sleeping**.
- I'm sure at 8 pm she'll **be getting** ready to go out.
- I think it'll **be raining** when we arrive.

6. Two actions happening at the same time in the future

We can use the future continuous to show that two future activities will be in progress simultaneously.

For example:

- While you're cooking, I'll **be doing** the laundry.
- At 9 pm, she'll **be studying** and Frank **will be playing** video games.

Some time words and phrases that we often use with the future continuous:

- this time tomorrow
- this time next week/month/year
- at this time tomorrow
- at [clock time]
- when + present simple
- while + present simple/continuous
- all day tomorrow
- all morning/afternoon/evening
- during (e.g. during summer, during the break)
- over the next (e.g. over the next few weeks, over the next couple of months)