

# Future Simple - Use

## When do we use the future simple tense in English?

Note: This is also called the **simple future** tense or the **future with will**.

We use the **future simple** for many things. A simple way to remember it is: use the future simple when you are talking about the future and there is no specific reason to use another tense (e.g. the present continuous, the future perfect, etc.).

### Pure future

#### 1. Predictions

We use the future simple to say what we think or guess will happen.

Words and phrases that are commonly used in these sentences: ***probably, definitely, I think (that), I don't think (that), I'm sure (that), I'm not sure (that), I guess (that), I suppose (that), I doubt (that)***

(We can use any subject with these verbs, e.g. ***he doesn't think.***)

Note: Here we can often use the "going to + verb" construction as well, but "going to + verb" is more common when we have evidence for our prediction.

*For example:*

- I think that it **will rain** tomorrow.
- Do you think they'll **come**?
- I'm sure everything **will be** OK.
- I guess we'll **find out** tomorrow.
- Frank **will** probably **take** your book to the park and **lose** it.
- They **will** definitely **say** yes.

**!** We usually say **"I don't think... will"**, and NOT **"I think... won't"** (although both options are grammatically correct).

For example: I don't think it'll snow. (Not: ~~I think it won't snow.~~)

## 2. Future facts or certainty

These are things that are expected or certain to happen.

Note: Sometimes people use the "going to + verb" construction here as well.

*For example:*

- The sun **will rise** tomorrow.
- The meeting **will start** at 10 am.
- You'**ll be** 16 next month.
- Those plants **won't grow** without water.

## Volitional will

We can also use the future simple to show somebody's willingness (or unwillingness) to do something in the future. In other words, it is about whether somebody wants to or does not want to something. This is sometimes called **"volitional will"**, and we can use it in the following situations:

## 3. Spontaneous (instant) decisions

This is when we have just decided to do something. These are decisions that we make at the moment of speaking.

Note: Here we can usually use the "going to + verb" construction as well, but "going to + verb" is more common when the decision was made before the moment of speaking.

*For example:*

- It's cold. I'**ll close** the window.
- I'm worried about Diana. I'**ll call** her now.
- I'm tired. I'**ll make** some coffee.

## 4. Promises

*For example:*

- I'll **be** there at 9 am.
- I'll **call** them tonight.
- We'll never **forget** the help you gave us.

## 5. Offers

Note: Here we can usually use "can + verb" as well. In British English, it is also common to use **shall** to make offers (see **Advanced grammar point** below), but it is normally used in question forms.

*For example:*

- I'll **help** you with your presentation.
- I'll **carry** your suitcase if you'd like.
- We'll **drive** you to the airport.

## 6. Requests

We can use the future simple to make a request sound polite. We are asking if somebody is willing to do something.

Note: Here we can also usually use other modal verbs such as **can**, **could** and **would** instead of **will**. **Could** and **would** just sound a little more polite than **can** and **will**.

*For example:*

- **Will** you **help** me?
- **Will** you **wash up** after dinner?
- **Will** you **email** me the report?

**!** For marriage proposals, the standard question is "Will you marry me?". We do not usually use other modals like "would" or "can".

## 7. Refusals

We can use **will not** (or **won't**) to say that somebody or something refuses to do something.

*For example:*

- I **will not sign** that contract.
- He **won't listen** to anyone
- My car **won't start**.

## 8. Determination and insistence

We can use the future simple to emphasise strong determination (really wanting to do something) or insistence (demanding that somebody else do something). Here we do not usually contract **will**, and we often stress the word **will** when we speak.

*For example:*

- I **will finish** this report today. (determination)
- We **will find** a solution. (determination)
- You **will be** home by 10 o'clock. (insistence)
- You **will not speak** to me like that. (insistence)

## 9. Invitations

We can use it to invite somebody politely.

Note: This now sounds slightly old-fashioned, and in modern English it is more common to use a construction like "would you like to + verb" here.

*For example:*

- **Will** you **come** to my party?
- **Will** you **have** some tea?
- **Will** you **join** our team?

## Other uses:

### 10. Habits and typical behaviours

We can use the future simple **form** to talk about typical or characteristic behaviours. The subject can be a person or a thing. Here we are not talking about one-time future events.

Note: We usually use the present simple for habits, but we often use the future simple if we want to say that the subject “tends to” or “typically does” something.

*For example:*

- I'll usually **have** a cup of tea after lunch.
- My dog **will bark** whenever someone comes to the door.
- They'll **argue** about the smallest things.
- A good dictionary **will give** example sentences.

### 11. Rules and instructions

The future simple form can also be used in formal language for rules or obligations. People often use it in legal or official documents. These are general rules — we are not talking about one-time future events.

*For example:*

- Students **will submit** their assignments by midnight on the due date.
- Employees **will wear** a safety helmet at all times.
- All payments **will be made** within 30 days. (passive construction)

### 12. The first conditional

*For example:*

- If Ethel studies hard, she'll **pass** the exam.
- You **won't be** late if you leave now.

## Advanced grammar point: shall

**Shall** can sometimes be used instead of **will**, and you will often see it in classic literature. However, people are using it less and less, especially in American English. In American English, it is mainly used in legal language.

In British English, **shall** is still fairly common in first-person (I/we) questions for:

- **making offers:**
  - **Shall I make** some coffee?
  - **Shall we take** you to the station?
- **making suggestions:**
  - **Shall I show** her the report?
  - **Shall we go** there on Monday?
- **asking for decisions/suggestions:**
  - I've lost my passport. What **shall I do**? (= What do you suggest?)
  - Where **shall we meet**?

For the above, speakers of American English would typically replace **shall** with **should**.

! For these types of questions, the meaning changes if you use **will**. If you use **will**, you are simply asking about a future event — you are not offering or suggesting something.

For example: **Will we go** there on Monday?  
= Is the plan to go there on Monday?

There are a few other situations in which people still sometimes use **shall**. In these cases, you can usually replace it with **will** without changing the meaning. However, **shall** sounds much more formal and is uncommon in everyday English. These situations are:

- **promises:**
  - I **shall** always **remember** your kindness.
  - You **shall receive** your payment tomorrow.
- **formal obligations:**
  - The witness **shall appear** in court on 17 May.
  - Employees **shall wear** a safety helmet at all times.
- **future events:**
  - We **shall hear** the results tomorrow.
  - The President **shall begin** his speech at 11 am.

Note: The contraction of **shall** is also **'ll**. The negative form of **shall** is **shall not** (short form: **shan't**). For example: I **shan't be** late.