

Talking about the future

English A2

What this topic teaches

Chinese talks about the future with or plus a time word, and the verb never changes. English has **three doors** into the future – *will*, *going to*, and the present continuous – plus one service entrance for timetables.

- **will**: instant decisions, promises, opinions about the future.
- **going to**: plans made before speaking, and predictions with evidence .
- **present continuous**: arrangements with a time and a person (topic 2's secret job).
- **present simple**: timetables only (topic 1's printed future).
- Memory hook: *will* is a door you open **now**; *going to* is a door you opened **earlier**; the continuous is a door with **people already waiting** behind it.

will: the door you open now

will + base verb (everyone, no changes – like *can*):

- **Instant decisions**, made at the moment of speaking: “*The phone is ringing.*” – “*I’ll get it!*”
- **Promises** : *I will always love noodles. I won’t forget your birthday.*
- **Predictions with opinion**, no evidence needed: *I think it will rain tomorrow.*
- The negative is **won’t** (a rebel spelling: will + not → won’t). Short forms: *I’ll, you’ll, she’ll.*
- Signal words: *I think, I hope, probably, maybe.*

going to: the door you opened earlier

be + going to + base verb:

- **Plans made before speaking**: *I’m going to study medicine.* The decision exists already; you are just reporting it.
- **Predictions with evidence**: *Look at those clouds – it’s going to rain.* You can see the evidence with your own eyes.
- **Collision**: *I’ll get it!* (the phone rings – decided now) vs *I’m going to visit grandma tonight.* (decided this morning).

The other two doors

Door	Use	Example
present continuous	an arrangement: people, place, time fixed	I'm meeting Li tomorrow at five.
present simple	a printed timetable	The train leaves at nine.

- All four can be correct – with different meanings: *I'll meet Li tomorrow* (just decided), *I'm going to meet Li* (my plan), *I'm meeting Li at five* (arranged), *The train leaves at nine* (the railway decided).
- △ “*I will meet Li tomorrow at five, we agreed last week*” sounds like the plan was born this second. If it was arranged earlier, the continuous is the honest door.

Watch out: traps for Chinese speakers

- △ **will is not the default future.** Because *huì* covers everything, learners *will*-everything: “*I will meet Li tomorrow*” (an arrangement), “*The train will leave at nine*” (a timetable). Match the door to the meaning.
- △ **Base verb after both:** *will go, going to go* – never “*will goes*” or “*going to went*”. The future is grammatically lazy; it does no verb work at all.
- △ **Tomorrow alone doesn't pick a tense.** could be any of the three doors; the English choice depends on when you decided, not on the time word.
- △ **will not = won't.** “*Willn't*” does not exist. *won't* is a rebel spelling from history; learn it as a friend.

Say it aloud

Plan a real weekend out loud, door by door.

- Instant decision: *It's hot. I'll buy an ice cream.*
- Plan: *I'm going to do my homework on Saturday morning.* (Stop laughing.)
- Arrangement: *I'm meeting my friends at the mall at three.*
- Timetable: *The bus home leaves at six.* Miss it and you are a person with a plan, waiting for a timetable.

Check yourself

Answer first, then read the explanation.

1. *“Someone is at the door!” – “I _____ get it!”* – **‘ll**. Decided this second: instant decision.
2. *Look at those clouds! It _____ rain.* – **’s going to**. Evidence you can see.
3. *We _____ (have) a test on Monday; the school announced it.* – **’re having**. An arrangement, so the continuous.
4. *The film _____ (start) at eight.* – **starts**. A printed timetable.
5. *I promise I _____ (not forget).* – **won’t forget**. A promise, and the rebel spelling.