

Future forms review

English B1

What this topic teaches

You know the four doors from A2: *will*, *going to*, the present continuous and the timetabled present simple. B1 adds the rule that separates good English from translated Chinese: **in a time clause , use the present simple, never *will*.**

- *When I **arrive**, I **will** call you.* – the *when* part takes the present simple.
- $\triangle$ “*When I will arrive, I will call you*” $\times$ – two *will*s, and the first one is illegal.
- Memory hook: *when / if / after / before / as soon as* are **time gates** . The future *will* cannot pass through a time gate; it waits outside while the present simple walks through.

The four doors, reviewed

Door	Use	Example
will	instant decision, promise, opinion prediction	<i>It's hot. I'll buy water.</i>
going to	earlier plan; prediction with evidence	<i>I'm going to study medicine.</i> <i>Look – it's going to rain.</i>
present continuous	fixed arrangement	<i>I'm meeting Li at five.</i>
present simple	timetable	<i>The train leaves at nine.</i>

- Quick test: **When was it decided, and by whom?** Now $\rightarrow$ *will*. Earlier by you $\rightarrow$ *going to*. Earlier with others $\rightarrow$ continuous. By a railway $\rightarrow$ present simple.
- *shall* survives in offers and suggestions: ***Shall we* go?** *Shall I open the window?* A polite fossil , alive and well.

The time-gate rule

After *when, if, after, before, as soon as, until, unless*, the present simple carries the future:

- *When I **arrive**, I'll call you.* (Not “*when I will arrive*”.)
- *If it **rains**, we'll stay home.*
- *I'll text you **as soon as** the film **ends**.*
- *Wait here **until** I **come** back.*

The logic: the main clause already carries *will*, so the time clause doesn't need to. One *will* per future is enough.

Collision corner: four futures for one evening

- *I'll cook tonight.* (just decided – you opened the fridge and surrendered)
- *I'm going to cook tonight.* (planned since morning)
- *I'm cooking tonight.* (your friends already promised to come)
- *The class starts at seven.* (the school printed it)

All correct. The difference is not the future; it's the **history of the decision**.

Watch out: traps for Chinese speakers

- $\triangle$ **The double *will*.** Chinese marks time with time words, so learners write “*When I will arrive...*” The time gate rejects it. *When I arrive, I'll call you.*
- $\triangle$ ***if* is also a gate.** “*If it will rain, we'll stay home*” $\times \rightarrow$ *If it rains, we'll stay home.* (But *I don't know if it **will** rain* is fine – that *if* means “whether” , not a condition. Different gate, different rules.)
- $\triangle$ **Don't future-mark everything.** Chinese says once and relaxes. English marks the future on the verb, but only once per clause. *Tomorrow I will go to Beijing and **will** eat hotpot* – the second *will* is legal but heavy; one is enough.
- $\triangle$ ***going to* needs its *be*.** “*I going to study*” $\times$ – *I'm going to study.* The engine rule from the continuous applies here too.

Say it aloud

Plan a trip out loud, using every door and one gate.

- It's decided now: I'll go to Chengdu.
- The plan: I'm going to eat hotpot every day.
- The arrangement: I'm meeting my cousin at the station.
- The timetable: the train leaves at nine.
- The gate: When I arrive, I'll call you. If the queue is long, I'll wait. As soon as I taste the hotpot, I'll forgive the queue.

Check yourself

Answer first, then read the explanation.

1. *When I ____ (arrive), I'll call you.* – **arrive**. The time gate takes the present simple.
2. “*The phone is ringing!*” – “*I ____ get it!*” – ‘**ll**. An instant decision.
3. *Look at those clouds! It ____ rain.* – ‘**s going to**. Visible evidence.
4. *If it ____ (rain), we'll stay home.* – **rains**. *if* is a gate too.
5. *I ____ (meet) Li at five tomorrow; we agreed on Monday.* – ‘**m meeting**. An arrangement with a time and a person.