

3 TIME OFF

FUTURE PLANS

There is no future tense in English and sometimes there is no real difference in meaning between two forms. Take any explanation of future forms as just a guide, not as fixed rules.

Questions about plans

We use the present continuous or *be going to* + infinitive (without *to*) to ask about plans.

What are you doing this afternoon?

Are you going away in the summer?

Where are you going to stay?

When are you going to finish work tonight?

You can also ask:

Do you have any plans for today / this afternoon / the summer?

DID YOU KNOW?

Instead of saying *be going to go*, we often just say *be going*. It's shorter and easier to say. For example, we usually prefer

Are you going away? to *Are you going to go away?*

Definite plans

We generally prefer to use *be going to* to talk about things that we have decided before we speak. The present continuous is also possible and doesn't change the meaning.

We generally prefer to use the present continuous to talk about arrangements we have made, but we can also use *going to*.

I'm going to travel round Vietnam later in the year.

I'm not going to have a holiday this year.

We're staying in a five-star hotel.

I'm seeing my grandparents on Sunday.

To show the plan or arrangement is an obligation, we use *have to* + infinitive (without *to*).

I have to work long hours in July and August.

I don't have to work on Friday so we could go out then.

Less certain plans

When we have not completely decided a plan or we want to show uncertainty, we use:

will + *probably* / *possibly* + infinitive (without *to*)

OR *probably won't* + infinitive (without *to*)

I'm not absolutely sure, but I'll probably go out later.

We'll possibly go out later, but it probably won't be for long.

might / *may* (possibly) (not) + infinitive (without *to*)

We might not go on holiday this year.

I might have to work right through the summer.

be thinking of + -ing

A: I'm thinking of going to China. I have a friend there who's invited me to visit. I'll see if I can afford it.

B: Really? When are you thinking of going?

You may also see the patterns below that show the speaker hasn't fully decided:

It depends ... how much it is / if I have time / on the weather.

I'll see ... what happens / what the weather's like / if I can later.

Exercise 1

Decide if either one or both forms in italics are correct.

- 1 *I can't wait for the holiday. I have to / I'm going to see my grandparents in Hong Kong.*
- 2 *My dad probably won't come / isn't coming with us. It depends how much work he has.*
- 3 *Over the holidays, I have to / I'm having to study for my exams. It's a pain.*
- 4 *We're thinking of going / to go to Cuba in April. It's supposed to be great.*
- 5 *A: What are you doing / will you do in the summer holidays?
B: I haven't decided really. I'm going to / I might just stay at home.*
- 6 *A: Do you have any plans on / for the weekend?
B: No, I'm not doing / I'm not going to do anything.*
- 7 *I might possibly go / I'm thinking of going travelling after I finish university. I'll see how much money I have.*

will and making decisions

We prefer *be going to* or the present continuous to talk about plans that are certain and exist (i.e. already planned / arranged). However, we prefer *will* when we are making a decision or promise about the future now.

A: I've just heard I have to go to a meeting later, so I can't drive you to the hospital.

B: Don't worry. I'll take the bus instead.

Exercise 2

Complete the sentences below with the correct form (*will* or *be going to*) of these verbs.

text	be	call	come	see
get	go	visit	do	

- 1 A: I'm afraid I can't meet you at the station. I _____ in Spain on a work trip that day.
B: That's OK. I _____ a taxi to my hotel. It's not a problem.
- 2 A: My plane is landing at around half past six.
B: OK. Well, I _____ and meet you at the airport, then.
- 3 A: What are you doing tomorrow? Do you have any plans?
B: I _____ a client in the morning, but after that I'm free. I _____ you sometime after one.
- 4 A: I _____ home now. I'm tired and it's late. I need to sleep.
B: OK. I _____ you in the meeting tomorrow morning then.
- 5 A: So what _____ you _____ about it? Any idea?
B: Hey, my boss is here. Can't talk now. I _____ you back later.