Future: going to or will or present continuous?

My friend is going to live in Italy. That boat is going to sink – there are too many passengers. Goodbye. I'll see you tomorrow. I'm playing tennis.

A Present continuous
Gill’s got a new boyfriend, Jack.
She’s looking at her diary.
GILL: I'm meeting Jack at 8.30 next Saturday.

1 Has Jack agreed to meet Gill next Saturday? .............
2 Is Gill talking about a arrangement or b a possibility? □

B Going to
Gill wants a new dress for Saturday
GILL: I'm going to buy a new dress.
Gill has made a decision. What is her plan now?
She ..................................... a new dress.

C Going to
Gill wants to go into town to buy her dress.
She’s looking at some black clouds.
GILL: I need an umbrella. It’s going to rain.

1 Is it raining now? .............
2 What seems certain because of the black clouds?
It ........................................ rain.

D Will
Gill’s phoning Jack about Saturday.
GILL: I’m getting the 7.45 bus.
So, I’ll arrive in town at 8.15.
The bus into town usually takes 30 minutes.
What time will the 7.45 arrive in town?
It ........................................ at 8.15. (This is a simple future fact.)

E Will
GILL: Can you meet me?
JACK: Yes. I’ll meet you at the bus station.
Does Jack decide to meet Gill a before she asks the question or b at the moment he speaks? □

REMEMBER!

Match the sentences with the explanations.
1 Jack’s seeing Gill at 8.30 next Saturday. □
2 Gill and Jack will be in town next Saturday evening. □
3 Goodbye, I’ll phone you tomorrow. □
4 I’m going to wear my new dress on Saturday. □
5 There’s a hole in Gill’s new dress. She looks very unhappy – she’s going to cry. □

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b An intention, a decision that we make now, at the moment of speaking.
c A simple future fact.
d An arrangement made for a particular time in the future.
e A future event or action that seems certain because of something we can see now.
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The problem: Students confuse these three different ways of talking about the future.

Typical mistakes:

- Don’t go to Florida in July. It’s going to be too hot. (It’ll be …)
- I’ve just heard the weather forecast. It’ll rain. (It’s going to …)
- Can I speak to Gill? – Yes, I’m going to call her. (I’ll call …)
- I see Jack next Saturday. (I’m seeing …)
- What’s Gill’s number? I’m phoning her. (I’m going to …)

Different uses of will/go ing to/present continuous Write these four sentences on the board (don’t write the explanations in brackets):

1. I’m seeing the doctor. (The arrangement has been made some time before.)
2. I’ll see the doctor. (A decision made now at the moment of speaking.)
3. I’m going to see the doctor. (A decision made before the moment of speaking.)
4. I’ll see the doctor. (A simple future fact.)

Tell students that all four sentences refer to the future.

Help them to put each sentence into a context that explains the use of the present continuous (1), will (2), going to (3) and will (4).

Examples:

1. I can’t come tomorrow evening. I’m seeing the doctor at 6.30.
2. Your arm might be broken. – Yes, you’re right. I’ll see the doctor.
3. Can I use your phone? I’m going to see the doctor. I feel really ill.
4. Tomorrow I’ll be in town at 5.30. I’ll see the doctor at 6.00, so I’ll get home at 7.00.

Going to for imminent events Check students’ understanding of going to used in situations where present evidence suggests an imminent future event or action.

Write on the board some leading sentences. Examples:

1. That waiter’s carrying too many plates. 2. Look at that car! He’s driving too fast.

Get the students to suggest sentences to follow the ones on the board. Examples:

1. He’s going to drop them. I’m going to see the doctor.
2. He’s going to crash. I’m going to hit that cyclist.

Extension Reference to the present To help students to understand how we talk about the future, you can explain that in most cases we’re talking about the present and the future at the same time.

I’m going to buy a new dress. (A plan, an intention I have now.)

She looks very unhappy – she’s going to cry. (A future event that seems certain because of what we can see now.)

I’ll have a coffee, please. (A decision we make as we speak now.)

I’m leaving at 6.00 tomorrow. (An arrangement I’ve already made – I know now what I’m doing tomorrow.)

The exception is a simple prediction, where we say what will happen in the future. There is no reference to the present: The world will be very different in 2050.

Answers to WHAT’S THE RULE? 6:

A 1 Yes 2 a  B 1 (%) going to buy  C 1 No  2 (%) going to  D will arrive  E b
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Future predictions
Ask students to suggest what the world will be like in 25 years’ time, using will / won’t.
Examples:
I think people will live longer. There will be a cure for cancer.
People won’t send ordinary letters – they’ll use e-mail.
Europe’s climate will be warmer.
More students will use computers to study.

Predictions and plans
Ask students to write the following:
1 three simple predictions about the future.
Examples:
I think I’ll pass my exams next month.
I’ll get home at about 6.00 tonight.
2 three sentences about their plans/intentions for the future.
Examples:
I’m going to work this weekend.
I’m not going to get married.
Then students work in pairs and tell each other about their predictions and their intentions.

What’s going to happen?
Ask students to think of a sentence demonstrating the use of going to for imminent future events suggested by present evidence.
Then ask individual students to stand in front of the class and mime the actions that suggest what he/she’s going to do.
The rest of the class guess what’s going to happen.

A telephone call
Students work in pairs and compose a short telephone conversation, using the present continuous and will. They’re phoning a friend.
Example:
A: Hello, can I speak to Carole?
B: I’m afraid she isn’t here.
A: When will she be back?
B: I think she’ll be back about 3.00.
A: OK. I’ll phone again at about 3.30.
B: She won’t be free at 3.30. She’s having a guitar lesson.
A: OK. I’ll phone this evening.
B: OK. I’ll tell her you phoned.

Answers to PRACTICE Exercises 6:
1 1e 2e 3a 4a 5d 6e 7b 8b + c 2 1 will (‘ll) be 2 am (‘m) going to have 3 are coming 4 will (‘ll) wear 5 isn’t going to rain
3 1 I’m not working 2 I’m going to buy 3 She’s working 4 I’ll phone 5 We’ll be
4 1 are you leaving 2 I’m getting 3 will you be
4 I’ll come 5 I’m going to cry
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1 Match the sentences with the explanations.

1 – Hi, Dan! What are you doing at the weekend? □
2 – I’m staying at home on Saturday. □
3 – What are you going to do? □
4 – I’m going to revise for my exams. □
5 – Will you be free on Saturday evening? □
6 – Yes, I’m not doing anything in the evening. □
7 – Goodbye. I’ll see you tomorrow. – I can’t see you tomorrow. I’m playing tennis. □
8 – OK. I’ll see you on Saturday.

I must go now. The cat’s on the table. It’s going to eat my dinner!

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2 What do you say? Use the present continuous or will or going to.

1 You’re 16. It’s your birthday next Friday.
   I (be) ................................ 17 next Friday.
2 To celebrate your birthday, your parents wanted to take you to a restaurant, but yesterday you decided to have a big party.
   I don’t want to go to a restaurant. I (have) ............................................. a big party.
3 You’ve invited twenty people. They’ve all accepted the invitation. You’re telling your parents about the arrangement.
   Twenty people (come) ............................................. to my party.
4 You aren’t sure what to wear on Friday. Decide!
   I know! I (wear) ............................................. my white trousers.
5 You want to have the party outside. You’re watching the TV weather forecast.
   Great! It (not rain) ............................................. on Friday.

3 Which sentence follows the first sentence? Underline the correct verb form.

1 I’m free tomorrow. (I’m not working, I won’t work.)
2 I’ve decided to go into town. (I’ll buy / I’m going to buy some new clothes.)
3 My sister can’t come with me. (She works / She’s working tomorrow morning.)
4 Who can I ask to go with me? I know! (I’m going to phone / I’ll phone Kate.)
5 We can get the 8.30 bus. (We’ll be / We’re going to be in town at 9.00.)

4 This is a dialogue in a romantic film.
Complete the dialogue, using the present continuous (x 2), will (x 2) and going to (x 1).

– When (1 you leave) ............................................. ?
– Tomorrow. (2 I get) ............................................. the 8.00 train.
– When (3 you be) ............................................. back?
– In a year, two years – I don’t know, but I promise (4 I come) ............................................. back.
– Two years! Oh, Ralph, I’m so unhappy. (5 I cry) .............................................