

Section 3 present and future

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possible further activities

More advertisements Students could look (on the internet or elsewhere) for similar advertisements. You could ask them to find three with *will* and three with the simple present, as in the illustration.

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language notes

Terminology varies in this area. We use the terms ‘simple present’ and ‘present progressive’; some students may have learnt to call these forms ‘present simple’ and ‘present continuous’. We also use the term ‘tense’ to cover both tense and aspect, for the sake of simplicity. These differences of terminology are of no practical importance for teaching purposes.

Many of the world’s languages have no tense systems – time relations are expressed in other ways. Those languages that do have tenses may have only one present form. Consequently, even advanced students may still have occasional difficulty in grasping and putting into practice the rather abstract distinctions between the two English present tenses.

**Look – it rains.*

**I’m not working on Saturdays.*

Students may also use a present tense instead of a perfect to talk about duration up to the present, by analogy with what happens in their mother tongues.

**I have this cold for a long time.*

**We’re living here since last June.*

The rules revised here are the basic rules of thumb for present tense use. Like many generalisations about English tenses, they are right most of the time – often enough to be useful – but there are exceptions and in-between cases (for instance, when the temporary-permanent distinction is unclearly defined):

I work for a really go-ahead firm. OR I’m working for a really go-ahead firm.

I don’t see much of Sarah these days. OR I’m not seeing much of Sarah these days.

Word order in present progressive questions with long subjects may still cause difficulty for some students:

**Where are going all those people?*

**Where all those people are going?*

Dropping third-person *-(e)s* is a very common and persistent mistake which may still occur at advanced level:

**My father work in a bank.*

It can happen for several reasons. The student’s mother tongue may not have different verb forms; or it may have some verb endings, but nothing to distinguish third-person singular (Scandinavian languages are like this). Final *-(e)s* may be difficult to pronounce after a consonant, or difficult to pronounce at all, for students whose languages have different phonetic structures from English (e.g. Spanish, Chinese or Thai speakers); sounds which are not pronounced are also easily dropped in writing. Or students may simply feel, with some justification, that third-person *-s* doesn’t really matter very much.

Pronunciation: the unstressed forms of auxiliary *am* and *are* can be difficult for some students to hear in fast speech. The CD-ROM exercises will help students to perceive these, and to pronounce present forms with natural rhythm.

possible further activities

Personalisation Get students to complete some or all of the following sentences:

- I don't remember ...
- I don't understand ...
- I don't know ...
- I don't want to know ...
- I always ...
- I never ...
- I'm trying to ...

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language notes

Instructions for routines are often given with imperatives ('**Cook** the rice gently in butter for a few minutes; then **add** the onions ...'), but present-tense forms are also common, especially in spoken instructions ('**You cook** ...; then **you add** ...').

Present-tense narrative ('This builder's just starting work when his boss comes up to him and says ...') is mostly used in informal spoken English; more formal written narrative is usually constructed with past tenses.

possible further activities

Where are you? Volunteer students give directions from the school (or town centre or wherever) to somewhere else without saying where this is. The others have to follow the directions and work out where they are.

Comparing directions If students are in an English-speaking country, get them to ask people (separately) in the street for directions between the same two places. (Teach a suitable formula like 'Excuse me – could you tell me how to get to ... / the way to ...?'.) Students make notes of the answers they get and compare notes – they are likely to find a surprising number of differences. It will also be interesting to check whether the directions were simple present ('You go ...') or imperative ('Go ...').

Mixed-up story Make two or more copies of the following silly story, cut it up as shown, shuffle the pieces, and give a copy of the mixed-up story to each of two or more groups.

Who can put the story back in order fastest?

A man is sitting on a bench
by a river in Scotland
reading a newspaper.
He looks up, and sees
that the woman on the next bench
is breaking an orange into small pieces.
Then the woman throws the pieces into the river
one by one.
When she has finished
she takes another orange out of her bag
and starts breaking it up.
The man goes back to his newspaper,
but then he thinks
'I wonder why she's doing that.'
'Excuse me,' he says,



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'I'm sorry to disturb you,
but why are you throwing pieces of orange
into the river?'
'To keep the crocodiles away,' she answers.
'But,' the man says,
'There are no crocodiles in this river.'
'You see,' says the woman.
'It works.'



Students' mixed-up stories Get groups of students to produce similar mixed-up stories and give them to other groups to sort out.

Plot summaries Students look at the summary of the opera *La Bohème* on page 39 and do the exercise. Then they write their own present-tense plot summaries of novels, films, plays, operas, traditional stories or other narratives.

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language notes

The simple rules that we teach beginners for the use of present tenses (revised on page 23) need expansion at this level. For instance, repeated actions and events can be referred to with progressive as well as simple forms; progressives can also be used for some relatively permanent situations (long-term changes).

The special use of a present progressive with *always* and similar words, to talk about unpredictable repetition, may not be familiar to all students at this level.

possible further activities

Personalisation Ask students to write or talk about developments that are taking place in their countries or regions, or other places they know.

Research report Ask students to collect information about current developments in a country or region of their choice, and to write a report to be presented to the class.

Internet Ask students to find some interesting sentences on the internet containing some of the following expressions:

"is getting better" "are getting better"
"is getting worse" "are getting worse"
"is getting more difficult" "are getting more difficult"
"is getting crazier" "are getting happier"

and so on, using other comparatives of their choice.

Extending Exercise 5 Ask students to write a letter or email from a prisoner, or a prison officer, to a member of his/her family, talking about the number of people who are dying in the prison. They should use some of the grammar and vocabulary from the text.

pages 28–29

language notes

Students are often told that verbs like *love*, *understand* or *remember* are never used in progressive forms. They are then naturally confused when they find examples that 'break the rule'. In fact, many 'non-progressive' verbs have occasional progressive uses to express particular meanings. There may also be an element of language change, with progressive uses becoming gradually more frequent.

possible further activities

Guesses Show students a picture of a very expensive car or yacht (for example), and ask them to make some guesses and remarks about it, using some or all of the following verbs:

weigh measure belong look imagine suppose impress

Possible answers, among many others:

- I think it weighs half a tonne.
- It measures about three metres in length.
- I imagine it belongs to somebody rich.
- It looks boring.
- It doesn't impress me.

Internet Ask students to check on the internet to see which of the following are more common:

- "it belongs" / "it is belonging"
- "it weighs" / "it is weighing"
- "I understand" / "I'm understanding"

and so on, with some other non-progressive verbs like *contain*, *consist*, *remember*, *promise*, *seem*.

pages 30–31

language notes

See note to students on page 22. While advanced learners will want to get a good grasp of the expression of the future in spoken and written English, it is important not to be perfectionist about this difficult aspect of English grammar. The reasons for the complexity are partly historical. *Will*, the two present tenses and the *going-to* structure all developed future uses at different times, and gradually divided up various kinds of future meaning between them, not very systematically. Consequently, notions such as 'prediction', 'deduction from present evidence', 'intention' 'decision', 'resolution' or 'certainty' can often be expressed by more than one structure. The more subtle distinctions have little practical importance as far as most students are concerned, and advanced learners have generally developed a sense for the main patterns of use. However, look out for occasional misuses of the simple present even at this level:

**I promise I phone you tomorrow.*

**I change my job soon, if I can.*

The difference between *going to* and *will* in predictions is not very clear-cut. Often both are possible, depending on whether we are emphasising what we can see coming (*going to*) or what we know/think/believe (*will*). Both structures are common in weather forecasts and horoscopes.

Unstressed *will* can be difficult to hear. The CD-ROM exercises will give students practice in perceiving the difference between *I go* and *I'll go* etc.

possible further activities

Personalisation Ask students to write:

- three things that they have decided they are going to do: for example 'I'm going to start taking exercise.'
- three plans they have made (present progressive with place and/or time): for example 'I'm seeing my girlfriend tomorrow evening.'
- three things they think somebody they know well will probably do one day: for example 'I'm sure my brother will have a car accident one of these days.'

pages 32–33

language notes

Older grammars and textbooks may still teach a distinction between a so-called ‘pure future’:

I shall
you/he/she/it will
we shall
they will

and a ‘coloured’ future expressing insistence, determination etc:

I will
you/he/she/it shall
we will
they shall

This is not generally valid for modern English.

I/we shall are particularly rare in American English.

possible further activities

Extending Exercise 2 Students imagine they are going on a similar trip, but to a different kind of place (the Sahara, Amazonia, the US, Britain, Mars ...). They write an email to a friend, like the one in Exercise 2, using similar grammar and some of the same vocabulary.

Mime Students mime suggestions with ‘Shall we ...?’. The others have to guess what the suggestion is (e.g. ‘Shall we dance?’ ‘Shall we play tennis?’).

Sample contracts Students might be interested to look at some contracts on the internet (typing “sample contracts” into a search engine such as Google will bring up examples), and to see how frequently *shall* is used in this particular genre.

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possible further activities

Finding more examples This lesson introduces three uses of the **be + infinitive** structure. Ask students to try to find examples of all three on the internet beginning “students are to”, “students are not to”, “visitors are to” or “visitors are not to”.

Extending Exercise 2 Students imagine they are young children or teenagers. They write rules beginning ‘Parents are (not) to ...’.

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possible further activities

Finding more examples Ask students to find interesting sentences on the internet including “will be starting”, “will be paying”, “will be expecting”, “will be running” and “will be playing” (or other verbs of their choice).

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possible further activities

Students’ opinions Ask students to think of one or more things that (in their opinion) will not have been completed/achieved/solved ten years from now. For example: ‘We will not have found life on other planets five years from now.’