

Predictions & Speculation Summary

Will & Going to for Future Predictions

Will and *going to* are the two forms used for predicting future events.

🔊 will

We use *will/won't + infinitive* to talk about what we think or know about the future and to ask questions about the future. For example:

Our team will win the football.

I think it will be warmer next week

He will meet us at the station tomorrow.

Will they join us later?

🔊 going to

We use *be (+ not) + going to + infinitive* for making firm predictions based on current evidence:

Look at those black clouds. It's going to rain.

Many small businesses are going to suffer because of this financial crisis.

We're going to be late, there's so much traffic.

Often **will** and **going to** can be used interchangeably for predicting without a significant difference in meaning:

The forecast says it will be sunny tomorrow

The forecast says it is going to be sunny tomorrow

I think they are going to be late

I think they will be late.

🔊 will or going to + adverbs of certainty

We can use *adverbs of certainty* to express different degrees of certainty about the future:

- surely, certainly, clearly, definitely, probably, doubtfully, obviously, undoubtedly

We will definitely come

She definitely won't agree

It will possibly work

That possibly won't change

You're probably going to win

They probably aren't going to listen to us

He is surely going to be late

I'm certainly not going to finish it tonight.

Note: The adverbs such as *definitely*, *probably* and *possibly* come after **will** in positive sentences but come before **won't** in negative sentences.

- maybe & perhaps

The adverbs *maybe* and *perhaps* normally go at the beginning of a clause:

Maybe he will come later

Maybe we won't go after all

Perhaps I'll see you there

Perhaps they'll stay another week

May, Might & Could for future speculation

May, might & could are modal verbs which do not change according to person. They act as auxiliary verbs so negative and question forms don't require the auxiliary verb "do".

Subject + may/might/could + infinitive without to

May, might & could are used to speculate about the future. They express uncertainty, we are not sure what will happen or what we will do. In this context there is no significant difference in meaning between these three modal verbs.

Positive

We might go to the cinema

I may see you tomorrow

He could leave early

Negative

They might not stay until tomorrow

She may not want it

It couldn't be John, he's in Australia

Note that the **question forms** with "might" and "may" are only used when **asking permission** to do something, they are not asking about the possibility or probability of something.

Speculating about the past

May, might & could can also be used in the past form:

Subject + may/might/could + have + past participle

Positive

They might have gone to shop

He may have finished early

She could have bought the car

Negative

They might not have visited Paris

We may not have seen him before

You could have missed the flight

There is also a *continuous form* in the past:

Subject + may/might/could + have + been + verb + ing

Positive

They might have been listening

He could have been training

Negative

They may not have been working

She might not have been looking

Other ways of expressing degrees of probability:

be bound to happen

be sure/ to happen

be likely to happen

be doubtful that

be uncertain

be unlikely to happen

Adverbs of degree can be added to *likely* to adjust the degree of probability:

+++ extremely, highly

++ really, very

± quite

- not very

-- not

--- not at all

It's extremely unlikely he'll come to the party tonight, he's got a deadline at work.

It's very likely they will cancel their holiday if Maria has to go to hospital.

It's not at all likely the merger will go ahead, given the current financial situation.