



FREE RESOURCE · GRAMMAR

Will vs going to

Use going to for plans you made before speaking and for predictions based on what you can see now. Use will for decisions made at the moment of speaking, offers, promises, and predictions based on opinion. In many sentences both are possible, and the difference is small.

What to know

The two forms

Will is a modal verb. It does not change for the person, and it is followed by the base form of the verb: I will go, she will go, they will go. The short form is 'll, and the negative is will not or won't.

- *I will call you later.* · *I am going to call my tutor tonight.*
- *She won't be late.* · *She isn't going to be late.*

Use going to for plans and for evidence

Going to has two main jobs. The first is a plan or intention you decided before you speak. If you have already bought tickets or made a decision, going to shows that the decision is old: We are going to visit my grandparents in Wales next month.

- A plan: I am going to apply for a scholarship this autumn.
- An intention: She is going to become a nurse.
- Evidence now: Look at the traffic. We are going to be late.

Use will for decisions, offers, promises and opinions

Will is the right choice when you decide at the moment of speaking. If your phone rings while you are busy, you say I'll answer it. The decision is new, so will is the natural choice.

When both are possible

Many predictions about the future can use either form. Technology will change how people work, and Technology is going to change how people work are both correct. In these cases, going to sounds a little more informal and personal, while will sounds more general and formal.

Questions and negatives

Questions with will put will before the subject: Will the new library open soon? Questions with going to use the verb be first: Is the new library going to open soon? In short answers, repeat the helper only: Will it open soon? Yes, it will. Is it going to open soon? No, it isn't.

Exercises

1. A: I can't open this window. B: I _____ help you.
 - a. am going
 - b. will
 - c. going to

2. My cousin has already bought a flat. She _____ move in next month.
- a. is going to
 - b. will to
 - c. is going
3. Look at the traffic! We _____ be late for the lecture.
- a. going to
 - b. are going to
 - c. will to
4. Find the mistake and write the right form: (1) I'm sure (2) people will to (3) use less plastic (4) in the future.
5. Begin with I. Put the words in order (one or more words are not needed): abroad / will to / am going to / study / next year. / I
6. Correct this: *I will to call you tomorrow.*
7. In my opinion, public transport _____ become cheaper.
- a. will
 - b. goes to
 - c. is going
8. Find the mistake and write the right form: (1) The company (2) is going to opened (3) a new office (4) next spring.
9. Don't worry. I promise I _____ tell anyone your secret.
- a. do not going
 - b. am not going
 - c. won't
10. Oh no, we have no milk. I _____ buy some on my way home.
- a. will
 - b. am going
 - c. going to

Practise online, free: hear every example and check your answers at www.ielts-laboratory.co/free-resources/will-vs-going-to/practice/

IELTS tip. In Writing Task 2, predictions with will, is likely to and may sound careful and academic, so use them to discuss future effects. In Speaking Part 2 and Part 3, going to is a natural way to talk about your own plans, such as After the test I'm going to look for a part-time job.

FOR TEACHERS · GRAMMAR

Will vs going to

AIM	Learners choose between will and going to by the reason for the prediction or decision, and avoid form errors.
TIME	25 minutes
LEVEL	B1 to B2 (IELTS 5 to 6.5)
MATERIALS	This worksheet, one copy per learner; the free online practice for the audio

Warm-up

Hold up a diary page for next weekend and ask What are you doing? Then drop a book and ask What will you do? to elicit instant reactions.

Lesson steps

1. Present two contrasting situations: a booked trip (going to) and a phone that rings (will). Elicit why each tense fits.
2. Give learners short dialogues with gaps. They decide whether each answer is a plan, an instant decision, an offer or a promise.
3. Learners write three plans for next year using going to and three predictions about their city using will with I think.
4. Collect form errors (will to, going to studies) and correct them as a group.

Extension

Ask learners to write a short Task 2 paragraph on the future of transport that uses will, is likely to and may, and no going to.

Answer key

1. b) will. An offer made at the moment of speaking uses will. Going to is for a plan made earlier, and the other two options are incomplete forms.
2. a) is going to. A plan that is already settled takes going to. Will is never followed by to, and going needs to.
3. b) are going to. There is evidence now, and going to needs the verb be before it.
4. Part 2: *people will to* → **people will**. Will is followed by the base verb with no to.
5. I am going to study abroad next year. Going to is followed by the base verb. The sentence starts with the subject and ends with the time.
6. I will call you tomorrow. Will is followed directly by the base verb. Going to is also correct, but not will to.
7. a) will. Will plus the base verb works for an opinion about the future. The other two are incomplete.

8. Part 2: *is going to opened* → **is going to open**. After going to we use the base form of the verb.
9. c) won't. Promises use will, and the negative is won't plus the base verb.
10. a) will. The decision is made at the moment of speaking, so will is natural. The other options are incomplete forms.

Questions learners often ask

Is there a real difference between will and going to? Yes, in some situations. Going to shows a plan made before speaking or evidence now, and will shows a new decision, an offer, a promise or an opinion. In many predictions, both are fine.

Which is better for IELTS Writing? Will, is likely to and may are natural choices in academic writing. Going to is acceptable but sounds more personal and informal.

Can I use the present continuous for the future? Yes, for fixed arrangements, such as I'm seeing the dentist on Friday. It is not a replacement for will in general predictions.

Do I say gonna in the speaking test? Gonna is natural in fast, relaxed speech, but going to is always safe. Do not write gonna in an essay.

Sources

- Swan, M. (2016). Practical English Usage (4th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Biber, D., Johansson, S., Leech, G., Conrad, S. and Finegan, E. (1999). Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English. Longman.

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