**Introduction to future forms**

There is no one future tense in English. Instead, there are several verb forms that can refer to future time. Sometimes, several forms are possible to express a similar meaning, but not always.

***Will* for prediction**  
1 The most common use of *will* is as an auxiliary verb to show future time. It expresses a future fact or prediction - *at some time in the future this event will happen.* This use is uncoloured by ideas such as intention, decision, arrangement, willingness, etc.  
*I'll be 30 in a few days' time.  
I'll see you later.*This is the nearest English has to a neutral, pure future tense.

*2 Will* for a prediction can be based more on an opinion than a fact or evidence. It is often found with expressions such as *1 think*, *I hope, I'm sure  
I think Labour will win the next election.  
I hope you'll come and visit me.  
I'm sure you'll pass your exams.*

***Going* to for prediction***Going to* can express a prediction based on a present fact. There is evidence now that something is sure to happen. We can see the future from the present.  
*Careful! That glass is going* to *fall over. Too late!  
Look at that blue sky! It's going to be a lovely day.*

Notes  
Sometimes there is little or no difference between *will* and *going to.*

***We'll***  *run out of money if we aren't careful.****We're going to***

We use *going to* when we have physical evidence to support our prediction.  
*She's going to have a baby.* (Look at her bump.)  
  
*That glass is going to fall.* (It's rolling to the edge of the table.)

We can use *will* when there is no such outside evidence. Our prediction is based on our own personal opinion. It can be more theoretical and abstract.  
*I'm sure you'll have a good time at the wedding.* (This is my opinion.)  
*I reckon Liverpool will win.* (Said the day before the match.)  
*The glass will break if it falls.* (This is what happens to glasses that fall.)

**Decisions and intentions - *will* and *going* to**1 *Will* is used to express a decision or intention made at the moment of speaking.  
*1'11 phone you back* in *a minute.  
The phones ringing: 'I'll get it.'*

*2 Going to* is used to express a future plan, decision, or intention made  
before the moment of speaking.  
*When she grows up, she's going to be a ballet dancer.  
We're going* to *get married in the spring.*

**Present Continuous for arrangements**

1 The Present Continuous is used to express personal arrangements and fixed plans, especially when the time and place have been decided. A present tense is used because there is some reality in the present. The event is planned or decided, and we can see it coming. The event is usually in the near future.

*I'm having lunch with Brian tomorrow.  
Where are you having lunch?  
What are you doing tonight?*

2 The Present Continuous for future is often used with verbs of movement and activity.  
*Are you coming to the cinema tonight?  
I'm meeting the director tomorrow.  
We're playing tennis this afternoon.*

3 The Present Continuous is used to refer to arrangements between people. It is not used to refer to events that people can't control.  
*It's going to rain this afternoon. \* ~~It’s raining this afternoon.~~*  
*The sun rises at 5.30 tomorrow. \*~~The sun is rising at 5.30 tomorrow.~~*

Notes  
Sometimes there is little or no difference between the Present Continuous and *going to* to refer to the future.

***We're seeing***Hamlet *at the theatre tonight.****We're going to see***

When there is a difference, the Present Continuous emphasizes an arrangement with some reality in the present; *going to* expresses a person's intentions.  
*1’m seeing my girlfriend tonight.*I'm *going to ask her to marry me.*

**Present Simple for timetables**The Present Simple refers to a future event that is seen as unalterable because it is based on a timetable or calendar.  
*My flight leaves at 10.00.  
Term starts* on 4 *April.***Future Continuous**I The Future Continuous expresses an activity that will be in progress before and after a time in the future.  
*Don't phone at 8.00. We'll be having supper.  
This time tomorrow I'll be flying to New York.*2 The Future Continuous is used to refer to a future event that will happen in the natural course of events. This use is uncoloured by ideas such as intention, decision, arrangement, or willingness. As time goes by, this event will occur.  
*Don't worry abou.t our guests. They'll be arriving any minute now.*

**Future Perfect**  
The Future Perfect refers to an action that will be completed before a  
definite time in the future. It is not a very common verb form.  
*I'll have done all my work by this evening*