

## The Progressive in the Future

So far, we've used the progressive to describe three things: something you're doing in an exact moment, a phase you're going through, and a comparison of two things that happen or that you do at the same time. We've done this in the present and the past. Do you think it will be much different in the future?

We'll see at the end of this worksheet that there are a few differences when we use the progressive tense in the future, but, for starters, the answer is no: we'll be using the progressive to talk about things that are happening at a specific moment in the future.

Well, there's one pretty big difference to what we've talked about, so far: we don't usually know what phases we'll be going through in the future. They seem to happen spontaneously. So, that leaves us only two times to use the progressive: to describe something that will be unfinished in the future, or to compare two actions that will happen in the future. Let's look at **unfinished actions in the future**, first:

- I will be swimming tomorrow at seven.
- My mother will be cooking when we get home.
- We will be reviewing grammar next week.
- Udo Jürgens will be performing in Dresden around nine o'clock.

Wow. Would you look at that?<sup>1</sup> 'Will be performing' certainly is long, but it's the correct form. ('Will be' is the future form of 'be' the same way that 'will swim' is the future of 'swim'.)

Because, at exact times, you're usually in the middle of an action, it's easy to remember that, with exact times, we use the progressive. And, with exact times in the future, we use the future progressive. Remember, though, that there are some verbs that we *don't* use in the progressive, not even at exact times in the future. You can find a list of these verbs in eWorksheet on the present progressive.

**Practice:** Complete the sentences with the future progressive form of the verb in parenthesis.

1. I \_\_\_\_\_ my homework tonight at six. (do)
2. My sister \_\_\_\_\_ a portrait Saturday at three. (paint)

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<sup>1</sup> “Would you look at that?” Isn't really a question in English. We generally use it to express surprise or shock. Here, I'm just trying to point out that 'will be doing' certainly seems like a long, unwieldy expression. 'Unwieldy' means difficult to use, usually because what's being described is too big.

3. My teacher \_\_\_\_\_ me with grammar in the middle of the next lesson. (annoy)
4. We \_\_\_\_\_ the plane in twenty minutes. (board)

Easy, right? The only difference between this and what we practiced in the first two eWorksheets is that we use the future form of the verb. And, just as we earlier emphasized that not all exact times have a number ('in twenty minutes,' for example, is an exact time, though we don't necessarily know what time it will be), we have to remember that a lot of future times don't have an exact 'number.'

For example:

- After the game tonight, we'll be partying at my house.
- At sunrise, my girlfriend and I will be dancing on the beach.
- When dad gets home, we'll be cleaning the apartment.
- When your letter gets here, I'll be driving to Philadelphia.

So far, so good, right? The only limit to the times without a 'number' is your imagination. Here are a few more that I can think of: before class, when my wife gets home, after the baby is born. Take a moment to think of a few of your own.

**Practice:** In the space below, write some 'times' that don't involve numbers. It helps to think about events that happen in your day-to-day life.

Now, with the 'times' from above, form some sentences using the future progressive tense. If you couldn't think of any times, it's no problem: use the ones that I suggested above. ("Before class," and so on.) Write these sentences in the space below.

In the example above, it's possible to see 'when dad gets home' as a point in time, or as an action. And, really, both views are right. But sometimes you want to make clear that two things are

happening at the same time. In that case, it's important to remember the same rules that we used when making the same comparisons in the past. The **shorter action is in simple present** and the **longer action is in future progressive**. Some examples:

- I won't be staying in Berlin when your party starts.
- You'll be working at McDonald's when I graduate<sup>2</sup> from college. (This is not a nice thing to say, but it's been said more than once.)
- My mother will be driving to the airport when our plan lands. She's always a few minutes late.
- When I'm 21, you won't be collecting retirement.

**Practice:** Complete the following sentences with the correct forms of the verbs in parenthesis.

5. When the surprise party \_\_\_\_\_ we \_\_\_\_\_ from Wendy. (start / hide)
6. When the English course \_\_\_\_\_ over you \_\_\_\_\_ better English. (be / speak)
7. When the movie \_\_\_\_\_ I \_\_\_\_\_ kissing my girlfriend in the back of the theater. (end / kiss)
8. When I finally \_\_\_\_\_ English grammar, I \_\_\_\_\_ probably \_\_\_\_\_ ready to retire! (understand / get)
9. When you \_\_\_\_\_ school, I \_\_\_\_\_ in the choir,<sup>3</sup> anymore. (finish / sing)
10. My mother \_\_\_\_\_ dinner when we \_\_\_\_\_ home. (cook / come)

Put the correct form of the verb in the space provided in the following exercises. Read the whole sentence to be sure you know if the verb should be in simple future, or in future progressive.

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2 'graduate' is a word that means 'finish,' but specifically in reference to school or training. You can graduate from kindergarten, but not from painting the garage.

3 A 'choir' is a group of people who sing together. Many American schools have choirs. In Germany, many churches have choirs.

11. Next year I \_\_\_\_\_ the ninth grade. (start)
12. When she's older, my niece \_\_\_\_\_ to a British university. (go)
13. Peter \_\_\_\_\_ his homework after school today. (do)
14. Toby \_\_\_\_\_ a concert pianist when he retires. (be)
15. At seven this evening, he \_\_\_\_\_ dinner. (cook)
16. When I get home, my dog \_\_\_\_\_ for me. (wait)
17. We \_\_\_\_\_ dinner when your plane lands. (eat)
18. Nancy \_\_\_\_\_ you as soon as she has more information. (call)
19. Leonhardt \_\_\_\_\_ when we watch TV. (eat)
20. I \_\_\_\_\_ the website, when I have time. (improve)

### **The Present Progressive Futures**

So far, all of these have been pretty clear. But, when we use the progressive to talk about the future, we do some things that aren't so clear. There are two more ways that we use the progressive to talk about the future, and they are:

- **'going to'** and
- **present progressive in the future**

The **going to** future you may have heard before:

- He's going to be a doctor when he grows up.
- They're going to come here in twenty minutes or so.
- I'm not going to eat at McDonald's until I turn thirty.
- My father is going to retire this year.

Because you're now an expert in the progressive, you can recognize that the verb 'going to' is in the

present progressive form in each of these examples. But, you can also see that these sentences are all talking about something happening *in the future*.

How is that possible?

I don't know why we do this, but it's something that we do often in English: instead of saying "I will be an English teacher when I grow up," we say "I'm going to be an English teacher. . ." The meaning is *almost* the same, but you'll never hear a native speaker say the first sentence. The reason for that is the 'feeling' of the two forms.

**When we say 'I'm going to. . .' the feeling is more certain, it sounds like we're talking about a plan.** Using 'will' sounds not as certain, there is an implied<sup>4</sup> meaning of 'maybe.' And when children talk about their future jobs, they're usually very certain. . . even if they're not always right. In general, you *can* use 'going to' anytime you want to make it clear that you're talking about something that you really plan on doing. And, as another general rule, you *can't* use 'going to' with the word 'maybe.'

**Practice:** In the following sentences, fill in the appropriate future form (either 'will' or 'going to' in the present progressive). Use 'going to' for plans that sound definite, use 'will' for things that don't sound definite.

21. No matter what happens, I \_\_\_\_\_ find out who said I looked like an angry elephant.

22. Do you know what John is doing this evening? Do you think he \_\_\_\_\_ be at Andy's house?

23. In twenty minutes, I \_\_\_\_\_ go home. I'm too tired to stay.

24. I don't know what I'll study in college. Maybe I \_\_\_\_\_ study psychology or physics.

25. Nate can't come to the party. He \_\_\_\_\_ be at a concert on Saturday. He bought the tickets months ago.

26. According to the President's schedule, he \_\_\_\_\_ spend only one

<sup>4</sup> 'Implied' is a word meaning that, although it's not there, people understand it.

night in Dresden.

27. If there is time, Mary said she \_\_\_\_\_ help me with my English, but she said she couldn't promise anything.

28. After the English lesson, they \_\_\_\_\_ visit some friends.

'I am going to learn English' is the present progressive tense. But we use it to talk about the future. There is another way that we use the present progressive to talk about the future.

Is there anything that you always do? If you have English lessons, are they at the same time every week? Do you visit your grandparents every Thursday for coffee? Or do you meet your friends every Saturday evening to play cards?

When we're talking about something that we're going to do in the future, that we do regularly, we often use the present progressive tense. Consider these examples:

- Every Thursday, Toby meets his brother for chicken wings. Next Thursday, Toby is meeting his brother for chicken wings.
- My best friend visits her grandparents every Sunday afternoon. Next Sunday afternoon, she is visiting her grandparents.
- Wednesday I usually work on my website. Next Wednesday I'll be working on my website.

We also use the present progressive the same way we use 'going to:' to describe plans we have the future. The only difference is that 'going to' sounds *more* definite than the present progressive sounds. Here, we'll only use the present progressive to describe things that regularly happen. (If you're interested in the different feelings, it's pretty simple: 'going to' sounds like a plan that's important to you, the present progressive sounds like it's a plan, but it's no big deal.)

**Practice:** In the following sentences, look for clues that will help you decide if the action described is something that's done regularly or not. For regular actions, use the present progressive and for actions that don't seem to be regular, use 'going to' or 'will.'

29. Next Thursday I \_\_\_\_\_ to England for the first time! (fly)

30. I try to call my mother every weekend, so next Sunday I \_\_\_\_\_ my mother at eight. (call)

31. On Friday Mary \_\_\_\_\_ to her boyfriend, like always. (drive)
32. My favorite singer normally is on TV every weekend, but this weekend he \_\_\_\_\_ on vacation. (be)
33. I can't come to the meeting on Friday. I \_\_\_\_\_ to my Friday English class. (go)
34. I'm sorry I won't be in the English class next week. I \_\_\_\_\_ at the doctor's office. (be)
35. We \_\_\_\_\_ my parents for Thanksgiving. That's the one holiday we try to spend with them every year. (visit)

### Is That Everything?

There, you have it! We've reached the end of this worksheet. Really, you've made it to the end of a series of three worksheets. I know that grammar is sometimes a little bit difficult, and more than often trying,<sup>5</sup> but you've survived all the way through to the end. Now you know everything there is to know about the progressive.

Or do you?

If you listen to native English, you'll hear the progressive in contexts that don't fit any of the (very many) rules that we've covered here. Are the people speaking stupid? Maybe, but that's not why they're using the progressive differently. There are a few more meanings and 'feelings' conveyed by the progressive, but we'll leave them for another worksheet on another day. Right now, you have a really good foundation of knowledge that you can build on, and what you know now covers—probably—seventy percent of the cases in which you'll use the progressive.

What can you do now? Have you done the exercises? They're good practice, to re-enforce what you've learned. Have you checked your answers? Do that, too. And then, start speaking as much English as possible, and think about when you should use the progressive. . . and when you shouldn't.

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<sup>5</sup> 'Trying' is, of course, the progressive form of the verb 'try.' But it can also be used as an adjective that means that it requires a lot of patience. Small children can be trying, especially for people who aren't used to them.

## More Practice

What follows are more exercises. You shouldn't do them right now. My advice is to wait a day or more and then try the exercises, to help what you've learned in this worksheet 'stick' in your head.

**Practice:** In the following exercises, use the correct future form (simple future or future progressive) form of the verb in parenthesis to complete the sentence.

1. Tomorrow, Mike \_\_\_\_\_ dinner with his parents. (eat)
2. When Mike gets to his parents' house, his father \_\_\_\_\_ (cook).
3. Mike's mother \_\_\_\_\_ (give) him gas money when he comes.
4. Mike \_\_\_\_\_ (eat) dinner at six thirty.
5. Mike's father \_\_\_\_\_ (criticize) Mike during dinner.
6. Marlene \_\_\_\_\_ (drive) to New York City tomorrow after breakfast.
7. In New York, she \_\_\_\_\_ (shop) for rare books.
8. I think she \_\_\_\_\_ (go) to my favorite used book store in Manhattan.
9. At five thirty she \_\_\_\_\_ (meet) an old friend.
10. She usually goes to the theater when she's in New York, so I think she \_\_\_\_\_ (go) this time, too.
11. Every Friday I have coffee with some colleagues. This Friday I \_\_\_\_\_ (have) coffee with some of my colleagues.
12. Susanna usually comes to the coffee, but this week I think she \_\_\_\_\_ (be) in Berlin to visit a friend.

13. Dave won't be there, either. I know he has tickets to see "Rusted Eternity" in concert.

Friday he \_\_\_\_\_ (drive) to the concert.

14. But Megan has never missed our Friday coffees. I'm sure she \_\_\_\_\_

(come) this Friday, too.

15. I don't know what I \_\_\_\_\_ (do) after the coffee. Maybe I

\_\_\_\_\_ (go) for a jog. We'll have to see how the weather is.

**Practice:** In the following text, a lot of the verbs have been removed. Your job is to fill in the gaps in the text with the simple or progressive past, present and future. That's right: six different verb forms are possible for each blank spot in the text. To review, they are:

- He drove the car.
- He drives the car.
- He will drive the car.
- He was driving the car.
- He is driving the car.
- He will be driving the car.

When I (16) \_\_\_\_\_ (be) younger, a funny thing happened in my family.

When I (17) \_\_\_\_\_ (come) home from school, my father

(18) \_\_\_\_\_ (stand) on the dining room table! He

(19) \_\_\_\_\_ (not see) me and I hid for a while. When I came off the table, I

(20) \_\_\_\_\_ (ask) why he was on it. He (21) \_\_\_\_\_ (say) he

(22) \_\_\_\_\_ (play) a trick on my mother.

That evening, when we (22) \_\_\_\_\_ (eat) a noise

(23) \_\_\_\_\_ (come) from upstairs: my baby sister crying! My mother

(24) \_\_\_\_\_ (run) up the stairs to see what the problem was. But my sister

(25) \_\_\_\_\_ (sleep) peacefully in her bed. Downstairs, we

(26) \_\_\_\_\_ (can) still hear the crying. My mother

(27) \_\_\_\_\_ (not understand). She (28) \_\_\_\_\_ (be)

angry when she learned my father (29) \_\_\_\_\_ (hide) a tape recorder in the ceiling!

Now, my mother (30) \_\_\_\_\_ (play) tricks on my father! She

(31) \_\_\_\_\_ (put) salt in the sugar bowl he uses for his coffee, and once

she even (32) \_\_\_\_\_ (glue) the pages of his book closed! Last weekend

she (33) \_\_\_\_\_ (buy) a second remote control for the TV. When my

father (34) \_\_\_\_\_ (watch) TV, she (35) \_\_\_\_\_  
(change) the channels!

Together, she and I have a plan for this weekend. Yesterday, I (36)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (buy) two kilograms of rubber balloons on the Internet. Every  
Saturday, my father plays golf with his friends. This Friday, when he  
(37) \_\_\_\_\_ (play) golf, we (38) \_\_\_\_\_  
(fill) the balloons, and (39) \_\_\_\_\_ (put) them in his home  
office. I don't know how he (40) \_\_\_\_\_ (react) when he comes  
home and finds his office full of balloons.

Maybe you know the old saying: what goes around, comes around!<sup>6</sup>

**SOLUTIONS:** Here are the solutions to the practice sections in the eWorksheet.

1. I will be doing my homework tonight at six. (do)
2. My sister will be painting a portrait Saturday at three. (paint)
3. My teacher will be annoying me with grammar in the middle of the next lesson. (annoy)
4. We will be boarding the plane in twenty minutes. (board)
5. When the surprise party starts we will be hiding from Wendy. (start / hide)
6. When the English course is over you will be speaking better English. (be / speak)
7. When the movie ends I will be kissing kissing my girlfriend in the back of the theater.  
(end / kiss)
8. When I finally understand English grammar, I will probably be getting ready to retire!  
(understand / get)
9. When you finish school, I won't be singing in the choir, anymore. (finish / not sing)
10. My mother was cooking dinner when we came home. (cook / come)
11. Next year I will start the ninth grade. (start)
12. When she's older, my niece will go to a British university. (go)
13. Peter will do his homework after school today. (do)
14. Toby will be a concert pianist when he retires. (be)
15. At seven this evening, he will be cooking dinner. (cook)
16. When I get home, my dog will be waiting for me. (wait)
17. We will be eating dinner when your plane lands. (eat)
18. Nancy will call you as soon as she has more information. (call)

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<sup>6</sup> "What goes around, comes around" is a saying that means that the way you treat other people is the way they will treat you. We often use the saying to explain why we're mean to someone who was mean to us.

19. Leonhardt will be eating when we watch TV. (eat)
20. I will improve the website, when I have time. (improve)
21. No matter what happens, I am going to find out who said I looked like an angry elephant.
22. Do you know what John is doing this evening? Do you think he will be at Andy's house?
23. In twenty minutes, I am going to go home. I'm too tired to stay.
24. I don't know what I'll study in college. Maybe I will study psychology or physics.
25. Nate can't come to the party. He is going to be at a concert on Saturday. He bought the tickets months ago.
26. According to the President's schedule, he is going to spend only one night in Dresden.
27. If there is time, Mary said she will help me with my English, but she said she couldn't promise anything.
28. After the English lesson, they are going to visit some friends.
29. Next Thursday I will fly to England for the first time! (fly)
30. I try to call my mother every weekend, so next Sunday I will be calling my mother at eight. (call)
31. On Friday Mary will be driving to her boyfriend, like always. (drive)
32. My favorite singer normally is on TV every weekend, but this weekend he will be on vacation. (be)
33. I can't come to the meeting on Friday. I will be going to my Friday English class. (go)
34. I'm sorry I won't be in the English class next week. I will be at the doctor's office. (be)
35. We will be visiting my parents for Thanksgiving. That's the one holiday we try to spend with them every year.

**SOLUTIONS for the 'More Practice' Section** Here are the solutions for the 'more practice' section at the end of the eWorksheet.

1. Tomorrow, Mike will eat dinner with his parents. (eat)
2. When Mike gets to his parents' house, his father will be cooking. (cook).
3. Mike's mother will give (give) him gas money when he comes.
4. Mike will be eating (eat) dinner at six thirty.
5. Mike's father will criticize (criticize) Mike during dinner.
6. Marlene will drive (drive) to New York City tomorrow after breakfast.
7. In New York, she will shop (shop) for rare books.
8. I think she will go (go) to my favorite used book store in Manhattan.
9. At five thirty she will be meeting (meet) an old friend.

10. She usually goes to the theater when she's in New York, so I think she is going (go) this time, too.
11. Every Friday I have coffee with some colleagues. This Friday I am having (have) coffee with some of my colleagues.
12. Susanna usually comes to the coffee, but this week I think she will be (be) in Berlin to visit a friend.
13. Dave won't be there, either. I know he has tickets to see "Rusted Eternity" in concert. Friday he is driving (drive) to the concert.
14. But Megan has never missed our Friday coffees. I'm sure she is coming (come) this Friday, too.
15. I don't know what I will do (do) after the coffee. Maybe I will go (go) for a jog. We'll have to see how the weather is.

When I (16) was (be) younger, a funny thing happened in my family. When I (17) came (come) home from school, my father (18) was standing (stand) on the dining room table! He (19) didn't see (not see) me and I hid for a while. When I came off the table, I (20) asked (ask) why he was on it. He (21) said (say) he (22) was playing (play) a trick on my mother.

That evening, when we (22) were eating (eat) a noise (23) came (come) from upstairs: my baby sister crying! My mother (24) ran (run) up the stairs to see what the problem was. But my sister (25) was sleeping (sleep) peacefully in her bed. Downstairs, we (26) could (can) still hear the crying. My mother (27) didn't understand (not understand). She (28) was (be) angry when she learned my father (29) hid (hide) a tape recorder in the ceiling!

Now, my mother (30) plays (play) tricks on my father! She (31) puts (put) salt in the sugar bowl he uses for his coffee, and once she even (32) glued (glue) the pages of his book closed! Last weekend she (33) bought (buy) a second remote control for the TV. When my father (34) is watching (watch) TV, she (35) changes (change) the channels!<sup>7</sup>

Together, she and I have a plan for this weekend. Yesterday, I (36) bought (buy) two kilograms of rubber balloons on the Internet. Every Saturday, my father plays golf with his friends. This Friday, when he (37) is playing (play) golf, we (38) will be filling (fill) the balloons, and (39) putting<sup>8</sup> (put) them in his home office. I don't know how he (40) will (react) when he comes home and finds his office full of balloons.

7 For numbers 34 and 35, if you use the past progressive and simple past, it's also correct. The only difference is that in the past it means she did it once and it's over. With the present forms, it means that she still changes the channel when he is watching TV.

8 Maybe you're wondering why the answer is only 'putting' and not 'will be putting.' The reason is simple: because it's the second verb in a list it can borrow the 'will be' from the 'will be filling.'

Maybe you know the old saying: what goes around, comes around!