

# Expressions for talking about the future



Let's go - the presentation's **about to begin**.

## Definition

These are expressions which can be used instead of the standard tenses to talk about the future.

## Construction and uses

### Expressions with 'be'

Construction	Use	Examples
'be' + infinitive	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In news reports for likely events in the near future</li> <li>To talk about formal arrangements</li> <li>To give formal instructions or orders</li> </ol>	<p>The Government <b>is to announce</b> its plans for a new airport.</p> <p>The management <b>are to introduce</b> new safety guidelines.</p> <p>Employees <b>are not to leave</b> early without their manager's permission.</p>
'be about' + infinitive	To talk about something in the very near future	I'm just <b>about to leave</b> ; can I call you back tomorrow?
'be due' + infinitive	To talk about something that's expected to happen at a certain time	The new desks are <b>due to arrive</b> on Friday.
'be bound' + infinitive	To talk about something we feel is certain to happen	There's <b>bound to be</b> a restaurant at the station; let's wait and eat there.

<b>'be set' + infinitive</b>	<b>To talk about something that's ready to happen</b>	<b>Despite the problems, they're set to launch next week as planned.</b>
<b>be sure/certain/likely /unlikely etc. + infinitive</b>	<b>To talk about varying levels of likelihood that something will happen</b>	<b>We're thinking about having a barbecue on Saturday but it's sure to rain.</b>  <b>We're unlikely to find the right person for the job within the company.</b>
<b>be on the verge/brink/point of + noun or gerund</b>	<b>To talk about something that will happen very soon, often a new or different situation</b>  <b>Note that 'be on the brink of' usually relates to something particularly significant.</b>	<b>We're on the point of restructuring the entire department.</b>  <b>Peace talks broke down and the country is now on the brink of civil war.</b>

**Note that 'be' + infinitive:**

1. **is only used to talk about actions that can be controlled by people.**

The stolen items **are to be returned** to the museum this week. ✓

The stolen items **will be returned** to the museum this week. ✓

After a rainy spell, the warm weather **is to return** this weekend. ✗

After a rainy spell, the warm weather **will return** this weekend. ✓

1. **is often used in 'if' clauses but with a different meaning to 'if' + present tense.**  
**Compare:**

If our company **is to succeed** in this competitive market, we'll have to invest more in new technology. ['If' + result + cause - future success depends on something else happening first]

If our company **succeeds** in this competitive market, we'll be able to continue expanding. ['If' + cause + result]

**Expressions with other verbs**

Construction	Use	Examples
<b>Verb in present simple or present continuous + infinitive</b>  <b>These are some common examples:</b>  <b>aim, expect, guarantee, hope, intend, mean, propose, want</b>	<b>To talk about intentions</b>	<b>We're aiming to double</b> our turnover by the end of next year.  <b>Do you guarantee to deliver</b> all the items on time?  <b>She expects to get</b> a reply soon.
<b>'look' in present continuous + infinitive</b>	<b>To talk about a planned course of action</b>	<b>We're looking to recruit</b> five more technicians in the next six months.  <b>They're looking to expand</b> into the Asian market.

## Examples



I think it's **about to rain** again.



Mark's **due to retire** in six months - that's why he's looking so happy these days!



I knew we should have reminded John - he **was bound to forget!**



I'm all **set to leave**, just waiting for the next coach.

See also [The future seen from the past](#)



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