

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 | 1. In news reports for likely events in the near future | The Government is to announce its plans for a new airport. |
| | 2. To talk about formal arrangements | The management are to introduce new safety guidelines. |
| | 3. To give formal instructions or orders | Employees are not to leave early without their manager's permission. |
| 'be about' + infinitive | To talk about something in the very near future | I'm just about to leave ; 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 due to arrive on Friday. |
| 'be bound' + infinitive | To talk about something we feel is certain to happen | There's bound to be a restaurant at the station; let's wait and eat there. |

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

Note that 'be' + infinitive:

- 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. ✓

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