

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"> In news reports for likely events in the near future To talk about formal arrangements To give formal instructions or orders 	<p>The Government is to announce its plans for a new airport.</p> <p>The management are to introduce new safety guidelines.</p> <p>Employees are not to leave early without their manager's permission.</p>
'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	We're thinking about having a barbecue on Saturday but it's sure to rain. We're unlikely to find the right person for the job within the company.
be on the verge/brink/point of + noun or gerund	To talk about something that will happen very soon, often a new or different situation Note that 'be on the brink of' usually relates to something particularly significant.	We're on the point of restructuring the entire department. Peace talks broke down and the country is now on the brink of civil war.

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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