

The present continuous and present simple for future events

Introduction



I'm **meeting** some friends for lunch tomorrow.
The bus **leaves** at 3:00.



The

Definition

We can use the present continuous to talk about future arrangements.

The present simple for future events is sometimes called the timetable future. It is used to describe certainties in the future.

Construction

Affirmative: subject + 'to be' + present participle
weekend.

He **is visiting** his parents this

Negative: subject + 'to be' not + present participle
this weekend.

He **isn't visiting** his parents

Interrogative: 'to be' + subject + present participle
weekend?

Is he **visiting** his parents this

Note that we usually mention a particular date or time.

Affirmative: Subject + **bare infinitive**

The train **leaves** at 10.35.

Negative: Subject + do + not + **bare infinitive**

The train **doesn't leave** at 10.35.

Interrogative: Do + subject + **bare infinitive**

Does the train **leave** at 10.35?

Uses

The present continuous:

Uses	Examples
Social arrangements	I'm meeting Michel for a coffee after work. We're having dinner on Saturday and going to the theatre.
Other arranged events/appointments	I'm seeing my doctor tomorrow. I'm having my hair cut next week.
Responding to suggestions or invitations	Are you free for lunch tomorrow? No, sorry. I'm playing tennis in the morning and going shopping with my sister in the afternoon. How about next Saturday?

Note that "What **are** you **doing** this weekend/tonight..?" is a useful expression for beginning a conversation. It can be either:

- an example of 'small talk' with someone we don't know very well
- an expression of genuine interest in someone's plans
- a subtle way to ask 'Are you free?' if you want to ask someone out.

Present continuous or 'going to'?

When using going to, we might mention a specific time but the focus is on an intention. If the focus is on our fixed plans and arrangements, we use the present continuous.

Compare:

"We still have a problem with the computers so we're going to discuss it at the next meeting." [an intention]

"We still have a problem with the computers." "Yes, I know but don't worry, we're **discussing** it at the meeting tomorrow." [a fixed plan]

Present simple

Uses	Examples
Transport timetables	The plane takes off at 6.30 on Wednesday morning. What time does your train leave ? There isn't a bus from Paddington after 10 this evening.
Scheduled events	The concert starts at 9.00 pm. We have an emergency staff meeting in one hour. Your next English meeting is on the 5 th of April at 8.30. Is that OK for you?
Fixed, unchangeable events and plans	The sun sets two minutes earlier tomorrow. High tide is at 6 tomorrow. When do you start your new job?
After words such as when, until , as soon as, if, after, and before	I will tell him as soon as he arrives . I'm staying inside until it stops raining. She will call us when she is ready.

Examples



You're **meeting** your new clients tomorrow, aren't you? Yes, I'm **picking** them up from the airport & **taking** them out to lunch.



Are you seeing George again this week?



Are you **doing** anything special this weekend?
No, just the usual. **Taking** the children to the park and **visiting** my parents.
What about you two?

We're working in the garden and on Sunday, we're trying that new Italian restaurant.



What are you doing tonight? Nothing much, watching TV, relaxing...



The match between Liverpool and Everton kicks off at 2:00 on Saturday.



The Air France flight to New York leaves Charles de Gaulle at 14:25.



According to the itinerary we go out to the island this afternoon, we go on a tour of the monastery and then have a drink before we take the boat back to the mainland.



The shop opens again at 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.



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