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Generally, we use the **Present Continuous** tense to talk about actions taking place now or around now. But English speakers often use the Present Continuous to talk about **pre-arranged plans or events**.

**Present Continuous with future meaning**



The cartoon depicts two boys walking home from school. The boy on the left, wearing a green shirt and glasses, asks, "What are you doing after school?". The boy on the right, wearing a red shirt and a cap, replies, "I'm buying tickets for Saturday's match." A thought bubble above the boy in red shows him and a friend playing tennis on a court with a clock and a soccer ball. A yellow signpost with the word "School" points to the left.

We use the **present continuous** to talk about fixed arrangements in the near future.

via <http://elc-starters.blogspot.com/2015/02/grammar-present-continuous-future.html>

When we use the Present Continuous with this meaning, it is necessary to add a **time reference** (*tomorrow, tomorrow evening, on/next Sunday*) so we know it refers to the future and not to the present:

- *Jane is working at the moment (Present Continuous refers to present activity) but **in the evening** she **is playing** tennis (Present Continuous refers to planned activity in*

*future*).

Note: We can often use '**going to**' instead of the Present Continuous to indicate future meaning.

- Nick **is spending** time with his family tonight.

- Nick **is going to spend** time with his family tonight.

## How to form Present Continuous

### Statements

To make the Present Continuous with future meaning, we use:

**am / is / are + the '-ing' form of the verb** ([Present Participle](#)) and add a time marker.

- *I'm **staying** at home tonight.*
- *She **isn't working** on Thursday.*
- *We're **meeting** at two o'clock.*
- *John and Samantha **are getting** married tomorrow.*

### Negative sentences

We form the negative by adding '**not**' to either the full form or short (contracted) form:

**am / is / are + not + the '-ing' form of the verb**

- *We're **not having** a meeting this afternoon.*
- *=We **aren't having** a meeting this afternoon.*
- *=We **are not having** a meeting this afternoon.*
- *I'm **not coming** to the party tonight.*
- *= I **am not coming** to the party tonight.*

### Questions

To form a question, we rearrange the word order, placing the verb 'be' before the subject:

**am / is / are + subject + the '-ing' form of the verb**

- ***Are** you **going** to the concert tomorrow?*
- ***Is** your mom **joining** us for dinner next week?*

## When to use Present Continuous with future meaning

We often use the Present Continuous to talk about **future arrangements**. A **future arrangement** is a plan that we have decided and organised with another person, a group of people or a company:

- ***I'm working*** over the New Year. (this arrangement is between the speaker and his/her employer)
- ***We are staying*** with friends when we get to Boston.
- ***We're meeting*** Helen at 3 o'clock tomorrow afternoon.

It is not always necessary to state who the arrangement is with:

- ***I am leaving*** tomorrow. (I've already bought my train ticket.)
- So ***what are we all doing*** at Christmas?

We often use the Present Continuous to talk about things we *are about to start doing*. This is especially common with verbs of *movement*, such as *go, come, leave*, etc.:

- ***I'm going*** to bed now - goodnight.
- Will you help me finish the housework? - Sorry, I can't: ***I'm leaving*** for work now.

Certain verbs, actions or situations cannot be used with the Present Continuous with future meaning because they are not part of a **plan, an arrangement** or an **intention**.

The **present continuous tense for the future** can only be used when an action or situation can logically be planned in advance:

- ~~*My leg's hurting tomorrow*~~. Is NOT possible
- ~~*He's having an accident in March*~~. Is NOT possible
- ~~*It's snowing next week*~~. Is NOT possible

Here's a good video from To Fluency explaining the difference between 'will', 'going to' and Present Continuous for future actions and events:

See also:

[Future with 'Will'](#)

[Future with 'Going to'](#)