

Will he, or isn't he going to?

Talking about the future

Talking about the future is a really important part of conversation.

Where would we be if we couldn't say "*What are you doing at the weekend?*" or "*I'm going to the rugby next Saturday.*"

Now any grammar book worth its ELP sticker will tell you that there are several different verb forms for talking about the future, your own very considerable experience will tell you that the main ones are....

1. **Verb forms with –ing:** to be specific, "verb+-ing" and "going to +verb", as in

*What **are you doing** on Saturday, Phoebe?*

***I'm going to** wash the alpaca. How about you, Cynthia?*

***I'm going to finish** that fascinating grammar book from the resource room.*

2. Verbs with "will+verb", as in

*Thank you for calling, Mr Snuffpoodle. **I'll just put you through.***

*That's the phone. Don't get up Montague, my dear. Jeeves **will get it.***

Mostly, the –ing verbs are used when we are talking about planned future actions.

"What's your plan for Saturday, Phoebe?" "My plan is to wash the alpaca. What's your plan, Cynthia?"

The "will" verbs are mostly used for unplanned actions that we've just thought of.

"Seeing you're right there on the end of the phone Mr Snuffpoodle, I'd better connect you to the person you want to talk to"

The useful grammar book will tell you that **will** is also used for various other situations, such as predictions:

*I believe it **will rain** tomorrow, mark my words.*

*If you hold the umbrella like that **you'll do** yourself an injury, Augustus old chap.*

And, indeed this is true. However, it is my opinion that we native speakers use **–ing** ways of talking about the future more often than not.

***It's going** to rain tomorrow, mark my words.*

***You're going** to do yourself an injury, Augustus old chap.*

I also suspect that second language learners sometimes use will for the future where a native speaker wouldn't. (What's your theory?) Does your learner ever say...

*What **will** you **do** this afternoon?*

or

*My son **will** soon **go** to school.*

Listen to your learner, and see if an – **ing** sort of verb will make their speech sound more natural when talking about the future.

And what are YOU doing this weekend?