



A Fortune-Telling Activity for the Simple Future Tense

by [Anna Karin Roo](#)

Mastering the difference in use between *will* and *be going to* for discussing future predictions can be confusing for students. Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) state the difference between these two forms relates to their meanings, with *will* referring to spontaneous decisions and *be going to* for premeditated decisions. One solution to clarify this is through a 40-minute interactive lesson in which students create “fortune tellers” (sometimes called “cootie catchers”) to make four predictions using *will* (e.g., *You will meet a woman*) and four predictions using *be going to* (e.g., *You are going are going to meet a woman*).

Materials

- Square pieces of paper for each student
- Instructions for making the fortune teller
- List of sample prediction sentences

Procedure

1. Students Make a Fortune Teller (5–10 minutes)

Lead the students in the process of making a fortune teller:

1. Take a square piece of paper. Fold the paper diagonally in half both ways, and reopen to original size.
2. Fold corners into the center.
3. Turn the folded paper (now a smaller square) over, and again fold the corners into the center.
4. Fold the paper in half, lengthwise, in both directions.
5. Insert your fingers under the four outer tabs and push them up toward the middle, creating a point with your fingers and causing the flaps to stand out on their own.
6. Label the fortune teller:
 - a. Section 1. Label the four outer tabs 1–4.
 - b. Section 2. Label the inside tabs 1–8.
 - c. Section 3. The innermost tabs should have eight different predictions written under them.

(You can also go to [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fortune_telling) for instructions with images.) Guiding the students through the steps to make the fortune tellers with a sample finished product to show in class works best. Students need crisp folds to make it easier to use the fortune teller in the final activity. (Some students may already be familiar with fortune tellers and may be able to help other students with folding.)

Once the folding is completed, guide the students in numbering their fortune tellers. They should number the four outer flaps (1–4) and the eight inner triangles (1–8). Refer to the diagrams in the Appendix (6a for the outer flaps and 6b for the inner triangles).

2. Students Write Predictions (5–10 minutes)

Post example sentences (Appendix B) on a document viewer, computer, or overhead projector. Once the fortune tellers are formed, have students write predictions in their fortune tellers under the eight triangle tabs. Students need time to compose their predictions. They should be only be allowed to use a maximum of four example sentences, thus generating at least four sentences on their own. Monitor the room to ensure that students are writing the predictions in the correct part of the fortune teller.

3. Students Predict the Future (10–15 minutes)

Once everyone has finished composing sentences, demonstrate an interaction with a volunteer.

A: Can you tell me my future?

B: Yes! Pick a number between 1 and 4.

A: Four.

B: [Counts to 4 while holding and moving the fortune teller. At 4, reveals four new numbers between 1 and 8]: Pick a new number.

A: Five.

B: [Counts to 5 while holding and moving the fortune teller, reveals the numbers again]: Choose another number.

A: Three.

B: [Reads the prediction listed under the number three.]

Release the students to circulate the room using the fortune teller to predict the future for their classmates. Showing off their creation and interacting with their classmates solidifies the grammatical structure in a memorable way for students.

4. Recap the Simple Future Tense Forms (10 minutes)

After the interaction, lead the class in a discussion explaining the differences between the use of *will* and *be going to* for the formation of simple future statements. The lesson can include examples from the course textbook or explanations on the differences in meaning and usage between the two verb forms. It is useful to have students identify aspects of the tense from their interactions with their peers.

References

Celce-Murcia, M., & Larsen-Freeman, D. (1999). *The grammar book: An ESL/EFL teacher's course* (2nd ed.). Independence, KY: Heinle & Heinle.

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Appendix A. Example Sentences

1. You will sail around the world.
2. You will have 100 children.
3. You're going to be a famous movie star.
4. You're going to win 10 million dollars.
5. You're going to pass _____ (name of course).
6. You will meet your spouse at _____ (name of school).
7. You will climb _____ (mountain).
8. You're going to own a Maserati.
9. You're going to bike across the USA.
10. You will be accepted to Harvard University.
11. You're going to be married 10 times.
12. Your _____ (name of course) class will attend your wedding.
13. You will name one of your children _____ (name of teacher).
14. You will get 100% on all the irregular verb quizzes.
15. You will fall in love with a native English speaker.
16. Your English will be perfect at the end of the term.
17. You're going to become an ESL/EFL teacher.
18. You're going to be on _____ (name of TV Show).
19. Your soccer team will win the next World Cup.
20. You will have a romantic dinner at the _____ (name of local expensive restaurant).
21. You will find \$20 while you are waiting for the bus.