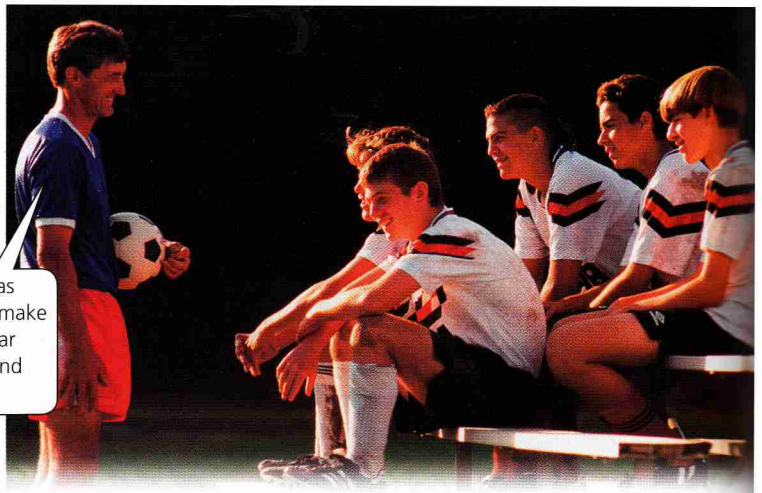


35 Certainty, habits and willingness



As a special favour, Jim **will act** as referee today since Martin can't make it, but he **won't do** it on a regular basis. He'll **be** on his way now and he should be here in a minute.

1 Present and future certainty

When we believe something is certain, but we don't know it as a fact, we use *will/won't*:
Jim's coming. He'll be on his way now.

'It's five o'clock. Janet'll be in Moscow now.' (based on our experience of travel times)
'I hope she's taken some winter clothes because it won't be warm at this time of year.'

For something ongoing, we use *will/won't + be + -ing* form:

Jason knows his successor will be having a hard time in the job. (based on Jason's experience)

If we know something as a fact, i.e we have independent proof, we use the present simple, or, for something ongoing, the present continuous:

Janet's in Moscow. She called us from her hotel.

Jason has heard from his successor. He knows she's having a hard time in the job.

Sometimes we wish to make a prediction about the future that someone made in the past.

For this we often use *would/wouldn't* as the past form of *will*:

We had to hurry to get him to the hospital. It would be too late otherwise.

This is similar to the use of *would* in reported speech (► Unit 51.5):

'I'm sure the Lions will win the rugby series.' → *She was sure the Lions would win the series.*

2 Past certainty

To refer to something which we feel certain has happened (but do not actually know), we use *will + have + past participle*:

We sent the invitation on Monday, so they will have received it by now.

This is similar to *must + have + past participle* (► Unit 32.3):

We sent the invitation on Monday, so they must have received it by now.

We use *won't + have + past participle* to refer to something which we feel certain has not happened:

We sent the invitations by second-class post. They won't have received them yet.



We do not use *mustn't* in this way, but we can use *can't*:

✗ *We sent the invitations by second-class post. They mustn't have received them yet.*

✓ *We sent the invitations by second-class post. They can't have received them yet.*

3 Present habits and routines

We often use *will/won't* to talk about habits and routines that have become predictable:

Every lesson is the same: he'll sit down, get his books out and then he'll start giving us instructions. He won't greet us or show any interest in us.

We can extend this use of *will* to talk about attitudes and characteristics:

The public will always side with the nurses in any dispute. (The adverb is often stressed.)

The dominant male in this species will not tolerate the presence of other males.

But when we state a simple fact, we prefer to use the present simple:

The public always sides with the nurses in any dispute.

The dominant male in this species does not tolerate the presence of other males.