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# Countdown to Launch

A space tourism company races to meet its deadline — every future tense gets a workout

B2

Reading

Grammar

40 min

## ★ Lesson Objectives

- ★ Read a long article about a space tourism company
- ★ Learn vocabulary related to space and project management
- ★ Master all advanced future forms at B2 level
- ★ Distinguish will, going to, present continuous, future continuous, future perfect
- ★ Discuss the future of space travel and personal ambitions
- ★ Write a project timeline using a variety of future forms

## 1 Before You Read

- ▶ Would you pay to travel to space?
- ▶ What will the world look like in 2050?
- ▶ How do you describe your plans and deadlines?

## 2 Reading: Ninety Days to the Edge of Space

*In a hangar in Reykjavik, 140 engineers work around the clock. In ninety days, their spacecraft will carry six passengers to the edge of space. If everything goes to plan. If.*

Orbis Aerospace, founded by aviation engineer Saga Eiríksdóttir, is about to attempt the first European commercial suborbital flight. The launch is scheduled for 15 September. By the time you read this, Orbis will have been preparing for over six years.

"We are launching on 15 September," says Eiríksdóttir. "By launch day, we will have completed over 4,000 safety checks. Our pilots will have been training in the simulator for eighteen months. We are going to be ready."

Six passengers paid 280,000 euros each. The flight will last ~90 minutes. At 110 km, passengers will experience four minutes of weightlessness and see Earth's curvature. "At that altitude, you will be looking down at the planet," says pilot Kasper Nilsson. "Nothing will have prepared you for that view."

The hybrid engine will fire for 72 seconds. "After that, momentum alone will carry it. By the time the engine shuts down, we will already be travelling at three times the speed of sound," says engineer Tomoko Hayashi.

Analyst Dr. Oliveira warns: "They say they are launching in September, but regulatory approval could delay it. By September, they may still be waiting for clearance." Eiríksdóttir: "We will have received all approvals by August."

Passengers are currently undergoing preparation. Over 12 weeks they will be training: emergency procedures, centrifuge, cabin mock-up. "By launch day, every passenger will have spent 200+ hours training. They will have practised every scenario, from smooth flight to abort."

Eiríksdóttir's ambition: weekly launches by 2030, tickets under 50,000. "In ten years, we will be flying hundreds to space yearly. By 2035, we will have carried 5,000+ passengers. Space will no longer be something you watch — it will be something you experience." Time will tell.

### 3 Vocabulary

Word	Definition	Example
<b>commercial</b>	relating to business	<i>First commercial flight.</i>
<b>aviation</b>	aircraft industry	<i>Aviation engineering.</i>
<b>suborbital</b>	reaching space, not orbit	<i>Suborbital flight.</i>
<b>boundary</b>	edge/limit	<i>Boundary of space.</i>
<b>component</b>	part of a system	<i>Every component tested.</i>
<b>simulator</b>	training machine	<i>Flight simulator.</i>
<b>weightlessness</b>	no gravity	<i>Four minutes of weightlessness.</i>
<b>curvature</b>	degree of curve	<i>Earth's curvature.</i>
<b>hybrid</b>	combining two elements	<i>Hybrid rocket engine.</i>
<b>momentum</b>	force keeping object moving	<i>Momentum carries it.</i>
<b>regulatory</b>	relating to rules	<i>Regulatory approval.</i>
<b>clearance</b>	official permission	<i>Final clearance needed.</i>
<b>centrifuge</b>	spinning G-force machine	<i>Trained in centrifuge.</i>
<b>scenario</b>	possible sequence of events	<i>Every scenario practised.</i>
<b>abort</b>	stop before completion	<i>Emergency abort.</i>

Word	Definition	Example
<b>infinite</b>	without end	<i>Infinite darkness.</i>

Collocations: space tourism • launch date • safety check • flight path • around the clock • ahead of schedule • on track • cutting-edge

## 4 Grammar: Advanced Future Forms

### ■ In the Text, You Saw...

- will: "The flight will last ninety minutes." (prediction)
- going to: "We are going to be ready." (plan)
- Present cont.: "We are launching on 15 September." (fixed arrangement)
- Future cont.: "You will be looking down at the planet." (in progress)
- Future perfect: "We will have completed 4,000 checks." (before deadline)
- Future perf. cont.: "Pilots will have been training for 18 months." (duration)

Form	Structure	Use	Example
<b>will</b>	will + base	Predictions, facts	It will rain.
<b>going to</b>	am/is/are going to	Plans, evidence	I'm going to study.
<b>Pres. cont.</b>	am/is/are + -ing	Fixed arrangements	I'm meeting at 5.
<b>Fut. cont.</b>	will be + -ing	In progress at future time	At 8 I'll be working.
<b>Fut. perfect</b>	will have + pp	Before deadline	By June I'll have finished.
<b>Fut. p. cont.</b>	will have been + -ing	Duration to future point	I'll have been living here 10y.

### ★ Key Time Markers

- By + time → future perfect / future perfect continuous
- At + time / This time next... → future continuous
- Tomorrow at 3 / On Friday → present continuous (fixed) or future continuous

### ▲ Common Mistakes

- X "By next year, I will finish." → ✓ "I will have finished." (by = future perfect)
- X "At 9 pm, I will work." → ✓ "I will be working." (in progress = continuous)
- X "I will meet her at 3." → ✓ "I'm meeting her at 3." (fixed = pres. cont.)

## 5 Game: Choose the Future Form

1. Launch is on 15 Sept. (fixed date) → is (present simple for timetable)
2. By launch day, we \_\_\_ 4,000 checks. (before deadline) → will have completed (future perfect)
3. At that altitude, you \_\_\_ down. (in progress) → will be looking (future continuous)
4. Dark clouds → It \_\_\_ rain. (evidence) → is going to (evidence-based)
5. I think tourism \_\_\_ affordable. (prediction) → will become (general prediction)
6. By 2030, pilots \_\_\_ for 5 years. (duration) → will have been training (fut. perf. cont.)

7. I \_\_\_ Sara at 7 pm. (confirmed) → am meeting (present continuous)
8. This time next week, I \_\_\_ on a beach. (in progress) → will be lying (future continuous)
9. By year-end, she \_\_\_ her PhD. (before deadline) → will have finished (future perfect)
10. We \_\_\_ to reduce the price. (plan) → are planning / are going to (plan/intention)

## 6 Comprehension Quiz

1. Seat cost?

Answer: 280,000 euros

2. Weightlessness duration?

Answer: 4 minutes

3. What is the Karman line?

Answer: Boundary of space at 100 km

4. Dr. Oliveira's concern?

Answer: Launch date may slip due to regulatory delays

5. 'By June, I \_\_\_ the project.' (before deadline)

Answer: will have finished

6. 'At 9 pm, I \_\_\_.' (in progress)

Answer: will be working

7. 'I \_\_\_ Sara at 3.' (confirmed)

Answer: am meeting

8. Which marker signals future perfect?

Answer: By + time

## 7 Fill in the Blanks

1. By Friday, we \_\_\_ all the tests.
2. This time tomorrow, I \_\_\_ on a plane.
3. She \_\_\_ the director at 2 pm tomorrow.
4. I think AI \_\_\_ most jobs within 50 years.
5. By 2030, he \_\_\_ here for ten years.
6. The train \_\_\_ at 18:05. (timetable)
7. They \_\_\_ to build a new factory. (plan)
8. By the time you arrive, I \_\_\_ dinner.

● **Answers:** 1. will have completed • 2. will be sitting • 3. is meeting • 4. will replace • 5. will have been living • 6. departs  
• 7. are going to • 8. will have cooked

## 8 Speaking & Writing

### ◆ Discussion Questions

1. Would you pay 280,000 euros for 90 minutes in space?
2. This time next year, what will you be doing?
3. By the time you're 60, what will you have achieved?
4. Is space tourism going to become affordable?
5. By 2050, what will have changed most?

### ◆ Example Dialogue

A: I'm travelling to Iceland in July. By then I'll have been saving for a year!

B: This time next month, you'll be hiking near glaciers.

A: I'm going to try to see the northern lights.

B: By the time you get back, you'll have taken thousands of photos!

### ◆ Writing Task

Write 100-150 words about a project, goal or plan for the future:

- Going to for plans. • Present continuous for arrangements.
- Future continuous for what you'll be doing. • Future perfect for deadlines.

Use at least 5 different future forms.

## 9 Review Checklist

### I can now...

- ✓ understand a long article about a space tourism project
- ✓ use vocabulary related to space and project management
- ✓ distinguish will, going to and present continuous for future
- ✓ use future continuous for actions in progress at a future time
- ✓ use future perfect for actions completed before a deadline
- ✓ use future perfect continuous for duration up to a future point



## Congratulations!

You have completed Lesson 19: Countdown to Launch.