
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The Grammar Gameshow

Will

The logo for BBC Learning English, featuring the letters 'BBC' in a white box above the words 'LEARNING ENGLISH' in white text on a teal background.

Will

Hello and welcome to today's Grammar Gameshow! I'm your host, Will! Will Will be willing to let you win? All will be revealed. And of course let's not forget Leslie, our all-knowing voice in the sky.

Leslie

Hello, everyone!

Will

Tonight we're going to ask you three questions about...

Leslie

Will! That little modal verb that does so much!

Will

It's my birthday and I'll cry if I want to! Now, let's meet our contestants!

James

Hello, all. I'm James.

Will

And contestant number two?

Frank

It's nice to meet you. I'm Frank.

Will

James and Frank? Oh dear. It's my birthday and what I say goes! Well... more than usual anyway! So now you're William, and you can be Wilfred!

James

Hey! You can't do that! I love being called James!

Will

Quiet, William! You know, you remind me a lot of my uncle Wilbert.

James

Why? Did he stand up for himself too?

Will

Oh no. He mysteriously disappeared! How about you Wilfred? Any problems?

Frank

Not here!

Will

Good! Now that we're all ready, let's have our first question. Like myself, the modal verb 'will' is a useful thing to have around. Have a look at these sentences and tell me what each use of 'will' is. Who wants to go first?

William

I will!

Wilfred

No, I will!

William

No, I will!

Wilfred

No, I will!

Will

Guys, guys, guys! You've got it all wrong! I Will. You William. You Wilfred! But if you can't decide, we'll use the buzzers. Here we go. It will rain tomorrow.

William

That's 'will' as a future auxiliary verb for a prediction.

Leslie

Correct!

Will

I'll have orange juice please.

Wilfred

That's 'will' used for a decision made at the moment of speaking.

Leslie

Correct!

Will

Thanks for your help. I'll pay you back on Friday.

William

That's 'will' used for a promise.

Leslie

Correct!

Will

Are you hungry? I'll make you a sandwich.

Wilfred

That's 'will' used as an offer to do something.

Leslie

Correct!

Will

I'll kill you for this!

William

That's 'will' used for a threat.

Leslie

Correct!

Will

Leslie?

Leslie

Well done. 'Will' is a modal auxiliary verb, which means it's always followed by a bare infinitive and doesn't change to show person or time. It has many uses including future predictions, future intentions, instant decisions, promises, threats, and offers to help, among others.

Will

Good job both of you. Have forty-seven-ty-six points. On to round two. True or false: In the same way as the present simple, 'will' can be used to describe present habits and routines.

Wilfred

True!

Will

It is true! Can you give me an example?

Wilfred

I've heard that people will often not come home from this show. And if anyone's going to disappear, I would much rather it be James. William! William! Of course! Of course!

Will

Leslie?

Leslie

Well done, Wilfred! 'Will' can be used to describe present habits and typical behaviour, just like the present simple.

William

I'll kill you for that!

Will

Excellent use of 'will' for a threat, but minus ten points for going to the dark side on my birthday... just like Uncle Wilber! He was a bit of a wet blanket too... at first. Wilfred, twelve points for you. Our final question, then. In some ways 'shall' can be used as a substitute for 'will', but there are a few rules about its use. Give me three of them.

William

We only really use 'shall' with 'I' and 'we'.

Leslie

Correct!

Will

That's one.

Wilfred

You can use 'shall' to ask someone's opinion when making an offer. For example: Shall I open the window?

Leslie

Well done. One more.

William

The response to a question with 'shall we' is 'let's' or 'let's not'.

Will

Leslie?

Leslie

Good stuff. 'Shall' can be used to ask for advice and make suggestions and offers. However, 'shall' is usually only used with the pronouns 'I' or 'we'. A common response to a suggestion with 'shall we' is 'let's'. 'Shall' is a little bit formal and a bit old-fashioned, but it has its place!

Will

Just like you, Leslie! Trapped for all eternity wherever you are! Excellent. Three points to William. And that brings us to the end of today's Grammar Gameshow. But before we go... let's play a party game! It's my birthday after all. How about musical podiums? I'll play some music and you two switch places. When the music stops, we'll know who the winner is! Are you ready? Go! Oh, I neglected to nominate which podium would lose. Oh, well! Release the seagulls. And the winner is... me! Oh, Leslie, what do I win?

Leslie

It's a birthday cake.

Will

Oh, Leslie! I thought you'd forgotten. You really are a true friend.

Leslie

Does that mean you'll invite me to your party?

Will

But, that means I'd have to let you out of your box in the sky. I've invited your family though! Say goodbye, Leslie.

Leslie

An nyeong hee ge se yo, Leslie.

Will

See you next time.