

Lesson Plan: Future perfect vs. future continuous (subtle differences)

Level: Advanced (C1–C2)

Time: 90 minutes (adaptable to 60)

Objectives

Students will:

- Distinguish between **completion vs. duration-in-progress** in future contexts
- Understand how each tense conveys **assumptions, expectations, and politeness**
- Use both tenses accurately in **formal, professional, and academic contexts**
- Analyze how tense choice affects **speaker attitude**

Target Structures

Future Perfect: *will have + past participle*

Future Continuous: *will be + -ing*

1. Lead-in: meaning before form (10 minutes)

Contextual contrast

Write on the board:

1. At 6 p.m., the team **will be finishing** the report.
2. By 6 p.m., the team **will have finished** the report.

Guided questions:

- Which sentence focuses on the **process**?

- Which one focuses on the **result**?
- Which sounds more **goal-oriented**?

Elicit:

- Future Continuous → activity in progress
- Future Perfect → completed action by a future point

2. Conceptual deepening: subtle meaning differences (15 minutes)

A. Focus of attention

Tense	Emphasis	Example
Future Continuous	Activity, duration, normal course of events	<i>This time tomorrow, she will be flying to Tokyo.</i>
Future Perfect	Completion, achievement, result	<i>By this time tomorrow, she will have flown to Tokyo.</i>

B. Assumptions vs. intentions

Explain that:

Future Continuous often expresses **neutral assumptions** (less personal, less forceful)

Don't call at 9; he'll be sleeping.

Future Perfect implies **logical conclusion or expectation**

He will have fallen asleep by then.

C. Politeness and distance

Highlight pragmatic use:

- *Will you be using the printer later?* (polite, non-intrusive)
- *Will you have used the printer by 3?* (deadline-oriented, more demanding)

Discuss how the tense affects **tone**.

3. Academic & professional contexts (10 minutes)

Analysis task

Give students authentic-style sentences:

1. *By the end of the decade, researchers **will have developed** more efficient batteries.*
2. *During the next phase, engineers **will be testing** the prototype.*

Ask:

- Why is each tense appropriate?
- What would change if the tense were switched?

Elicit:

- Future Perfect → milestones
- Future Continuous → ongoing phases

4. Controlled practice: meaning-based choice (15 minutes)

Students choose the tense and justify their answer.

1. *By the time you arrive, I ____ (prepare) the presentation.*
2. *This time next week, she ____ (work) on the final chapter.*
3. *By 2050, scientists ____ (map) the human brain.*

Answers depend on **intended meaning**, not just grammar.

5. Error analysis & reformulation (15 minutes)

Task

Students analyze sentences that are grammatically correct but **contextually weak**.

Example:

- *By 10 a.m., the manager will be meeting all clients.*

Questions:

- Is completion or process more important?
- Would **will have met** be better?

Students rewrite and explain.

6. Contrastive practice: minimal pairs (10 minutes)

Students discuss how meaning changes:

1. *At noon, I'll be having lunch.*
2. *By noon, I'll have had lunch.*

Follow-up:

- Which implies availability after noon?
- Which suggests flexibility?

7. Freer practice: scenario-based production (15 minutes)

Task options (choose one):

A. Professional Planning

Students write 6–8 sentences describing a project timeline using **both tenses**.

B. Polite Inquiries

Students rewrite direct questions to sound more polite:

- Will you finish the report by Friday?*
→ *Will you be finishing the report by Friday?*

Peer feedback focuses on **tone and implication**.

8. Review & metalinguistic reflection (5 minutes)

Class discussion:

- When does grammar become a **pragmatic choice**, not a rule?
- Which tense sounds more neutral? More result-focused?

Exit task:

Write two sentences about the same future event—one with each tense — and explain the difference.

Common advanced learner pitfalls

- Overusing Future Perfect where **process matters**
- Ignoring the **politeness function** of Future Continuous
- Treating both tenses as interchangeable without context

Optional homework / extension

- Analyze a business report or academic article:
 - Identify future perfect vs. future continuous
 - Explain the writer's intention
- Rewrite a project proposal, adjusting tense for **tone and emphasis**