

Unit 9

When and if sentences (When I do... / if I do...)

a Study this example:

A: What time will you phone me tonight?

B: I'll phone you **when I get** home from work.

'I'll phone you when I get home from work' is a sentence with two parts: 'I'll phone you' (the main part) and 'when I get home from work' (the **when** part). The sentence is future (*tonight*) but you cannot use **will** or **going to** in the **when** part of the sentence. Instead we use a present tense, usually present simple (**I do**).

- I'll send you a postcard **when I'm** on holiday. (*not* 'when I will be')
- **When** the rain **stops**, we'll go out. (*not* 'when the rain will stop')

The same thing happens after:

while **after** **before** **until/till** **as soon as**

- Can you look after the children **while I am** out? (*not* 'will be')
- **Before** you **leave**, you must visit the museum. (*not* 'will leave')
- Wait here **until I come** back. (*not* 'will come')

b You can also use the present perfect (**I have done**) after **when/after/until** etc. to show that the first action will be finished before the second:

- **When I've read** this book, you can have it.
- Don't say anything **while** Tom is here. Wait here **until** he **has gone**.

It is often possible to use present simple or present perfect:

- I'll come **as soon as I finish**. *or* I'll come **as soon as I've finished**.
- You'll feel better **after you have** something to eat. *or* You'll feel better **after you've had** something to eat.

c After **if** we also use the present simple (**I do**) for the future:

- It's raining. We'll get wet **if we go** out. (*not* 'if we will go')