



Will or Shall?

Both WILL and SHALL convey the idea of a **future action**, that is, an action yet to be performed. Yet, these two modal verbs are not synonymous with each other, as you can ascertain by analyzing the examples below:



1. *Shall we go to the cinema?*

In contemporary English, SHALL is mostly used in the **interrogative form** in **requests** and **invitations** expressed in the first person singular or plural (**I/we**). This is due to the fact that SHALL expresses **intentionality**.



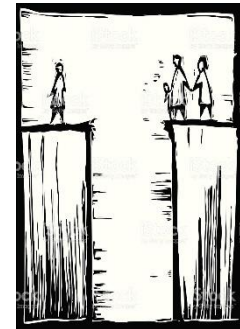
2. *Will we ever get to the cinema?*

WILL, by contrast, may be used to express unpremeditated decisions, but is also the standard form of **actions, events and situations beyond the speaker's own control** – which is exactly the opposite of intentionality.



3. *You shall not pass!*

Until the 1960s SHALL was also used in the **affirmative form** to express, again, the **speaker's intentionality**. 'You shall not pass', for example, means that the speaker will prevent this from happening (= intentionality). This use remains nowadays in **legal jargon**.



4. *You will not pass!*

Unlike the previous example, 'You WILL not pass!' doesn't express the speaker's intentionality, but a **condition beyond their power or control**.