



Presentation

We can express future probability in different ways.

Modal verbs: *may, might, could, should*

Use *may, might* and *could* to talk about the probability that something is true now or will happen in the future. Their meaning is essentially the same.

It may/could/might snow later.

Use *may well / might well / could well* to say that something is quite probable:

*If the rain stops, we **may well** have some sunshine later.*

Might not and *may not* express future possibility, but we don't use *could not* in this way: *The weather forecast **could be** true, but it **might not be**.*

(don't say: *The forecast **might be** true, but it **could not be**.*)

Use *should* to describe a positive situation that you expect to happen: *The rain is clearing so we **should have** sunshine later.*

(don't say: *There's a lot of cloud so we **shouldn't have** any sunshine.*)

Adverbs: *perhaps, maybe, probably, almost certainly, almost definitely*

Perhaps and *maybe* go at the beginning of a sentence:

Maybe it'll snow later.

Other adverbs of certainty go before a main verb and after the auxiliary in affirmative sentences and before the auxiliary verb in negative sentences:

*The clouds **will probably** disappear soon.*

*It **definitely won't** rain today.*

The adjective (un)likely

Likely and *unlikely* are adjectives (not adverbs). We can use subject + *be* + *likely/unlikely* or *it is likely/unlikely* + *that* + clause:

*The temperature **is (un)likely to** rise above zero degrees.*

*It's (un)likely **that** it'll freeze tonight.*

Be likely to and *will probably* have the same meaning, but *be likely to* is more formal.

Other common adjectives of probability are *bound* and *sure*. We use *be bound + to + infinitive* and *be sure + to + infinitive* to say that you think something is certain to happen or to be true:

*It's **bound to** rain later.*

*It's **sure to** freeze tonight.*

Noun phrases

Noun phrases such as *the likelihood is, the chances are, there's a good chance* and *there's no doubt* are followed by *that* + a clause: *The **likelihood is that** there'll be severe thunderstorms overnight.*

Exercises

1 Write the words in the correct order.

- 1 may well the tornado at midday hit Florida
The tornado may well hit Florida at midday.
- 2 the be true weather forecast could be might not but it
- 3 should weather think we month warmer next have I
- 4 it'll tonight almost certainly snow
- 5 won't the definitely reach hurricane land
- 6 frost unlikely it's that week have we'll this
- 7 tonight sure to they're rain forecast
- 8 the will that likelihood is weather more the become changeable

2 Complete the sentences with one word. Different words are possible in one sentence.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 It may be true that we need to use more renewable energies. | 4 The likelihood is governments will spend more on protection from extreme weather. |
| 2 all our energy will come from wind power in the future. | 5 There's doubt among most scientists that the global climate is changing. |
| 3 They'll certainly build more nuclear power stations. | 6 As oil runs out, there's a chance that car engine will use alternative fuels. |

3 Rewrite the first sentence using the word in brackets.

- 1 I expect the rain to stop and then we'll have some sunshine afterwards. (should)
I expect the rain to stop and then afterwards.
- 2 It's possible that we won't get any sunshine today. (might)
We any sunshine today.
- 3 It's quite probable that we'll have rain later. (may well)
..... rain later.
- 4 The hurricane will probably miss this part of the country. (maybe)
..... this part of the country.
- 5 I'm sure it will freeze tonight. (definitely)
..... tonight.
- 6 This winter, the temperatures will probably be the lowest in years. (bound)
This winter, the temperatures in years.
- 7 We're sure to have some very hot summers in the next few decades. (likely)
..... some very hot summer in the next few decades.
- 8 The roads will definitely be blocked with snow tomorrow morning. (doubt)
There's be blocked with snow tomorrow morning.