

Futurology

As we start a new year, futurologists are already coming up with and a new set of predictions. What does 2009 hold in store for us?

1 Mark each word or phrase with one of the following symbols: (↑), (↓) or (→).

fall	collapse	decline	grow	rise	remain	stable	increase	drop
------	----------	---------	------	------	--------	--------	----------	------

Futurology: the study of the future, including how people will live & work
(Definition based on *Macmillan English Dictionary*
© Macmillan Publishers Ltd 2007)

2 Scan the article. Find as many words from exercise 1 as you can in just one minute and underline them.

2009 Predictions 'When I grow up, I want to be ... a futurologist' my son told me the other day. 'Why?' I asked him. 'Because I cannot lose my job' he replied. Ah – the wisdom of the young. Whether your predictions are right or wrong doesn't seem to matter! Here are my favourite predictions which turned out to be wrong: 'Next Christmas, the iPod will be dead'. No, it wasn't a Microsoft employee who made that one, but the entrepreneur, Sir Alan Sugar. How about: 'There is no reason for anyone to have a computer at his home.' That statement was made in 1977. How many homes don't have a PC? And five years ago, did Bill Gates really say: 'Two years from now the problem of spam will be solved?' He did.

Let's rewind to New Year's Eve 2007. I don't remember anyone predicting the financial meltdown of 2008. I must have missed reading: 'The pound will fall to its lowest ever against the Euro'. Did anyone predict that by December, UK high street favourite Woolworths would collapse? Hindsight is a wonderful thing. The World Bank has just forecast 'a significant decline in global economic growth in 2009'. Well,

there's a surprise. I'm not qualified in finance, but I bet I could make exactly the same prediction! It's easy, isn't it?

So, what are my predictions for 2009? Well – there'll be a few more bankruptcies and a fall in retail sales. Funnily, if I'm proved wrong, then it'll be good news! Then, the clever futurologist simply needs to write: 'contrary to expectation ...' The good news is that whatever they write, they won't lose their job. Did Alan Sugar, or Bill Gates?

Here's a handy guide to 2009: 'Prices will *increase / drop / remain stable*. Delete as necessary!' One thing we can say about the future is that it hasn't happened yet. Another thing we can say is that we cannot predict it! If we could, we would have foreseen the effects of hurricane Katrina and we would know when oil is going to run out. We would all be rich now, playing the stock markets. So go on – what sort of a year do you see ahead for 2009? Make your predictions – if you dare!

3 Read the whole article. How would you describe the tone of this article?

4 Find one word in each line that does not form a collocation with the word 'prediction'.

4.1	(a) incorrect	(b) false	(c) true	(d) forecast	(e) accurate	PREDICTION
4.2	(a) stock	(b) inaccurate	(c) confident	(d) correct	(e) gloomy	

5 Choose three areas from the grid below and then make three predictions. Write these in the box below. Make your predictions to others in the group and see if they agree or disagree.

retail prices	share prices	bankruptcies	finance / economy	technology
environment	automobiles	medicine	house prices	inflation
unemployment	natural disasters	energy prices	my company	other (specify)

Prediction 1:	Prediction 2:	Prediction 3: