

Be

about to do sth

Be

on the point of
(doing) sth

Be

on the verge of
(doing) sth

Be

on the brink of
(doing) sth

to be going to do something very soon.

- We were just about to leave when Susan arrived.
- I'm about to eat.
Can I phone you back?

It is often used with just:

- We're just about to set off for a walk.
Do you want to come?

used in the past to refer to things that were going to happen but didn't:

- I was about to complain but he came over and apologised.

It is not used with time expressions:

- I was about to call you.

Not: I was about to call you in ten minutes.

to be going to do something very soon.

- I was on the point of giving up the search when something caught my eye in the bushes.
- The country's economy is on the point of collapse.
- I was on the point of leaving my job but then I got promoted so I changed my mind.
- I was on the point of going out when the telephone rang.
- Bill is on the point of having a nervous breakdown.

to be at the point where something is about to happen.

- The show was on the verge of being cancelled due to low ratings.
- Mike seemed on the verge of tears.
- Mountain gorillas are on the verge of extinction.
- After 18 years in business he had some unfortunate losses and was on the verge of bankruptcy.

To be at the point where a new or different situation is about to begin:

- Scientists are on the brink of (= extremely close to) a major new discovery.
- She believed she was on the brink of discovering a cure for cancer.
- He was on the brink of tears.

IDIOM

teeter on the brink/edge of something

to be very close to a very unpleasant or dangerous situation

- The country is teetering on the brink of civil war.