

The Passive

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Listen and repeat. Then act out.



We form the passive with the verb **'to be'** and the past participle of the main verb.

The letter **was written** by Tim.

Study the following examples to see how the passive is formed in the present simple and past simple:

	Active	Passive
Present Simple	Jack waters the plants.	The plants are watered by Jack.
Past Simple	Tina sent the email.	The email was sent by Tina.

Interrogative	Negative
Are the plants watered every week?	The plants aren't watered every week.
Was the email sent by Tina?	The email wasn't sent by Tina.

When changing a sentence from the active to the passive:

- the object of the active sentence becomes the subject of the passive sentence.
- the active verb changes into a passive form. (to be + past participle)
- the subject of the active sentence becomes the agent and is either introduced with the preposition **by** or omitted.

	subject	verb	object
Active	George	fed	the dog.
Passive	The dog	was fed	by George.

We use the **passive**:

- when the agent (the person who does the action) is unknown, unimportant or obvious from the context.
 My wallet **was stolen** yesterday. (unknown agent)
 The house **is cleaned** twice a week. (unimportant agent)
 The thief **was arrested**. (by the police – obvious agent)
- when the agent is one of the following words: people, one, someone/somebody, they, he, etc.
 They **published** the report last week. The report **was published** last week.

1 Circle the correct word.

- 1 Coffee **(is)** / **are** made from coffee beans.
- 2 Cola **is** / **are** drunk by millions of people around the world.
- 3 *Great Expectations* **was** / **is** written by Charles Dickens.
- 4 This ring **was** / **were** given to me as a gift.
- 5 Foreign languages **is** / **are** taught in every school.
- 6 Our car **was** / **is** washed every week.

2 Fill in the gaps with *is*, *are*, *was* or *were*.

- 1 *Macbeth* **was** written by Shakespeare.
- 2 Fiat cars made in Italy.
- 3 Tamara and José invited to a party last week.
- 4 Our flat cleaned every week.
- 5 The telephone invented by Alexander Graham Bell.
- 6 The World Cup held every four years.
- 7 The Parthenon visited by thousands of tourists every year.
- 8 A short story competition organised every year.
- 9 The castle destroyed by a fire in the fifteenth century.
- 10 Dinner served at 7 o'clock every evening.



Guess What

In teams, choose an object. Describe it to the other team and see if they can guess which one it is.

- paper / write in • metal / open doors • plastic / measure things
- rubber / erase things • wood / write with • leather / carry papers



Team A, Student A: It is made of paper and it is used for writing in.

Team B, Student A: Is it a notebook?

Team A, Student A: Yes, it is.

- 3 Match the words in the columns and make sentences using the past passive as in the example:

A	B	C
The film <i>ET</i>	paint	Vincent van Gogh
The Golden Gate Bridge	build	Lewis Carroll
Radium	direct	Steven Spielberg
<i>Alice in Wonderland</i>	discover	Joseph Baermann Strauss
<i>The Starry Night</i>	write	Marie and Pierre Curie

- 1 The film *ET* was directed by Steven Spielberg.
 2
 3
 4
 5

- 4 Rewrite the sentences in the passive form.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 James Joyce wrote this book.
This book was written by James Joyce. | 6 Does she cook dinner every night?
..... |
| 2 They deliver the post every day.
..... | 7 Did Nicky wash the dishes?
..... |
| 3 Birds eat seeds.
..... | 8 Ben didn't steal Johnny's bag.
..... |
| 4 A storm destroyed three houses in the neighbourhood.
..... | 9 They found the missing painting.
..... |
| 5 They built the school in 1956.
..... | 10 Fiona takes the dog for a walk every day.
..... |

- 5 Put the newspaper headlines in the passive.

1 FIRE DESTROYED
LOCAL LIBRARY

2 QUEEN OPENS
NEW SCIENCE MUSEUM

3 TSUNAMI HIT
COASTAL VILLAGE

4 FISHERMAN SAVED TEENAGER

5 FACTORY POLLUTES RIVER

- 1 The local library was destroyed by a fire.
 2
 3
 4
 5