



PASSIVE VOICE

THE FORM

- The passive of an active tense is formed by putting the verb to be into the same tense as the active verb and adding the past participle of the active verb.

be + past participle (VIII)

- The subject of the active verb becomes the 'agent' of the passive verb.
- The agent is very often not mentioned.

eg.

Active : We keep the butter here.

Passive : **The butter is kept here.**

Active : They broke the window.

Passive : **The window was broken.**

Active : People have seen wolves in the streets.

Passive : **Wolves have been seen in the streets.**

- When it is mentioned it is preceded with “by” and placed at the end of the clause. eg. *This tree was planted by my grandfather.*

TENSE/VERB FORMS	ACTIVE VOICE	PASSIVE VOICE
Simple present	keeps	is kept
Present continuous	is keeping	is being kept
Simple past	kept	was kept
Past continuous	was keeping	was being kept
Present perfect	has kept	has been kept
Past perfect	had kept	had been kept
Future	will keep	will be kept
Conditional	would keep/	would be kept
Perfect conditional	would have kept	would have been kept
Present infinitive	to keep	to be kept
Perfect infinitive	to have kept	to have been kept
Present participle/gerund	keeping	being kept
Perfect participle	having kept	having been kept

- Past Progressive :
The board **was discussing** the issue
The issue **was being discussed** (by the board)
- Present perfect simple :
Tourism **has harmed** many countries
Many countries **have been harmed** by tourism.
- Past Perfect:
He **had delivered** the letter
The letter **had been delivered**
- Future simple :
The government **will launch** a new social security program
A new social security program **will be launched**
- Future with be going to:
The company **is going to build** a power plant
A power plant **is going to be built** by the company
- Modals:
We **will** (should/can/ must) **choose** a new representative.
A new representative **will** (should/can/ must) **be chosen**.

THE USE

- When it is not necessary to mention the doer of the action as it is obvious, as in :
The rubbish has not been collected.
- When we don't know, or don't know exactly, or have forgotten who did the action, as in:
The minister was murdered or **My car has been moved!**
- When the subject of the active verb would be 'people' as in:
He is suspected of receiving stolen goods. (People suspect him of . . .)
They are supposed to be living in New York. (People suppose that they are living . . .)
- When the subject of the active sentence would be the indefinite pronoun one:
Active : One sees this sort of advertisement everywhere.
Passive : **This sort of advertisement is seen everywhere.**
- When we are more interested in the action than the person who does it:
The house next door **has been bought** (by Mr. Jones).
If, however, we know Mr. Jones, we would use the active;
Mr Jones, **has bought** the house next door

SOME NOTES

- The passive of continuous tenses requires the present continuous forms of to be:

Active : They are repairing the bridge.

Passive : The bridge **is being repaired**.

Active : They were carrying the injured player off the field.

Passive : The injured player **was being carried** off the field.

- Other continuous tenses are rarely used in the passive, so that sentences such:

They have/had been repairing the road and

They will/would be repairing the road, are not normally put into the passive.

- However, when changed to passive the pattern is similar to those of simple tenses:

The road has/had been repaired or **The road is being repaired**

The road will/would be repaired

SOME NOTES

- Auxiliary + infinitive combinations are made passive by using a passive infinitive:

Active : You must/should shut these doors.

Passive : These doors **must/should be shut**.

Active : They should/ought to have told him.
(perfect infinitive active)

Passive : He **should/ought to have been told**.
(perfect infinitive passive)

SOME NOTES

- Verbs of **liking/loving/wanting/wishing** etc. + object + infinitive form their passive with the passive infinitive:
Active : He wants me to take photographs.
Passive: He wants **photographs to be taken**.
- With verbs of **command/request/advice/invitation** + indirect object + infinitive we form the passive by using the passive form of the main verb:
Active : He invited me to go.
Passive: I **was invited** to go.
- But with **advise/beg/order/recommend/urge** + indirect object + infinitive + object we can form the passive in two ways: by making the main verb passive, as above, or by advise etc. + that, should + passive infinitive:
Active : He **urged** the Council to **reduce** the rates.
Passive : **The Council was/were urged** to reduce the rates, or
He urged **that the rates should be reduced**.

SOME NOTES

- agree/be anxious/arrange/be determined/determine/decide/demand + infinitive + object are usually expressed in the passive **by that. . . should**, as :

Active : He **decided** to sell the house.

Passive : He decided **that the house should be sold**.

- advise/insist/propose/recommend/suggest + gerund + object are usually expressed in the passive **by that. . . should**, as above:

Active : He **recommended** using bullet-proof glass.

Passive : He recommended **that bullet-proof glass should be used**.

- It/They + need + gerund can also be expressed by it/they + need + passive infinitive. Both forms are passive in meaning:

The wall **needs repainting** or The wall **needs to be repainted**

- Other gerund combinations are expressed in the passive by the passive gerund:

Active : I remember them taking me to the Zoo.

Passive : I remember **being taken** to the Zoo.

SOME NOTES

- In theory a sentence containing a direct and an indirect object, such as **Someone gave her a bulldog**, could have two passive forms:

She was given a bulldog or **A bulldog was given to her**.

The first of these is much the more usual, i.e. the indirect object usually becomes the subject of the passive verb.

- Questions about the subject of a passive verb are also expressed by an affirmative:

Something was done. ~ What **was done**?

One of them was sold. ~ Which of them **was sold**?

- Interrogative verbs in active questions may become affirmative verbs in passive questions:

What did they steal?(interrogative)

What **was stolen**?(affirmative)

- Note, however that, when the question refers to the agent, an interrogative verb is necessary:

Who painted it?(affirmative)

Who **was it painted by**?(interrogative)

SOME NOTES

- When a verb + preposition and object combination is put into the passive, the preposition will remain immediately after the verb;

Active : We must write to him.

Passive: He must **be written to**.

Active : You can play with these cubs quite safely.

Passive: These cubs **can be played with** quite safely.

- Similarly with verb + preposition/adverb combinations:

Active : They threw away the old newspapers.

Passive: The old newspapers **were thrown away**.

Active : He looked after the children well.

Passive: The children **were well looked after**

WITH OR WITHOUT AGENT?



- The agent in a passive sentence is mentioned when it is important or necessary, as in:

The Hardian Wall was built **by the Romans**.

Di Bawah Bendera Revolusi was written **by Soekarno**

- In most cases, however, the agent is not mentioned. These are due to some reasons:

1. Unknown agent

Ex. **My wallet has been stolen.**

In this case, there is no point in adding an agent 'by somebody'.

2. Generalized agent

Ex. **Bicycles are widely used in the city instead of public transport**



3. Obvious agent

Ex. **The murderer has been arrested!** (we assume by the police)

4. Unimportant agent

Ex. **I was advised to obtain a visa in advance**

5. Impersonality

Using the passive is a way of avoiding the naming of a specific person who is responsible for an action.

Ex. **It has been decided to reduce all salaries by 10%.**

In descriptions of processes, there is emphasis on the actions performed rather than on the people who perform them.

Ex. **Then the packets are packed into boxes of twenty-four.**

INFINITIVE CONSTRUCTIONS AFTER PASSIVE VERBS

- After acknowledge, assume, believe, claim, consider, estimate, feel, find, know, presume, report, say, think, understand, consider etc.
- Sentences of the type People consider/know/think etc. that he is . . . have two possible passive forms:

It is considered/known/thought etc. that he is . . .

He is considered/known/thought etc. to be . . .

Ex. Active : People believed that he had useful information.

Passive: **It was believed that he had useful information** or

He was believed to have useful information.

- After suppose

suppose in the passive can be followed by the present infinitive or perfect infinitive of any verbs, as in:

You are supposed to know how to drive

He is supposed to have escaped disguised as a woman

- Infinitives placed after passive verbs are normally full infinitives:

Active : We saw them go out. Passive : They **were seen to go** out
He made us work. We **were made to work**.

- **let**, however, is used without to:

Active : They let us go Passive : We were let go.

- The continuous infinitive can be used after the passive of believe, know, report, say, suppose, think, understand:

He is believed/known/said/supposed/thought to be living abroad =
People believe/know/say/suppose/think that he is living abroad.

You are supposed to be working = You should be working.

- The perfect form of the continuous infinitive is also possible:

He is believed to have been waiting for a message = People believed that he has been waiting for a message.

You are supposed to have been working = You should have been working.