



The Passive



THE PASSIVE

How the passive is formed:

We form the passive by using the verb to be followed by the past participle:

Active:

The police officer saw the robber at the airport.
She's following him.
She'll catch him soon.

Passive:

The robber was seen at the airport.
He's being followed.
He'll be caught soon.

Active

to catch
to have caught
catching
having caught
am / are / is catching
catch(es)
will catch
am / are / is going to catch
has / have caught
caught
was catching
had caught
would catch
would have caught

Passive

to be caught
to have been caught
being caught
having been caught
am / are / is being caught
am / are / is caught
will be caught
am / are / is going to be caught
has / have been caught
was / were caught
was being caught
had been caught
would be caught
would have been caught

When the passive is used

The passive is used quite often in English, both in speech and writing. We use the passive when:

- we don't know who or what did something:
My bicycle's been stolen. (= Someone has stolen my bicycle.)
The first tools were made in Africa two million years ago. (= People made the first tools...)
- the action is more important than who did it:
Income tax was introduced in England 'in 1798.
- it is obvious who or what did something:
The thief s been arrested.

We can use by + person / thing to show who does the action if this information is important:

The robber was seen by the police officer. (= The police officer saw the robber.)

Verbs with two objects

Sometimes an active verb (e.g. give) has two objects:

A witness gave the police some information.

or A witness gave some information to the police.

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Either object can be the subject of a passive sentence:
The police were given some information by a witness.
or Some information was given to the police by a witness.

TO HAVE SOMETHING DONE

When we ask someone else to do something for us, we often use the structure to have something done. It is not usually necessary to say who did the action:

The president had the car taken to the airport (by his driver). (= The president's driver took the car to the airport.)

I had my hair cut. (= The hairdresser cut my hair.)

I'm having my kitchen painted. (= The decorator is painting my kitchen.)

They want to have their car fixed. (= They want the garage to fix their car.)

In informal speech, we sometimes use get instead of have:

I got my hair cut. (= I had my hair cut.)

CONTRAST: HAVE AND GET

The causative **have** and the causative **get** are very similar and often interchangeable. However, the causative get is more concerned with the arranging that is required in order for something to be done:

I had the car serviced this morning.

(I caused this to happen but I may or may not have taken the car to the garage myself.)

I got the car serviced this morning.

(This is almost the same but there is an assumption here that I took the car to the garage.)

When we are concerned with the process of something happening and not the preparatory arrangements, we use the causative have and not the causative get:

I like having my hair done.

They stayed with us while they were having their flat decorated.

We do not generally use the causative get in the present perfect or past perfect:

Oh, you've had your hair done. (NOT ~~you've got your hair done~~)

Notes

- We also sometimes use get + object + past participle to say that we did something ourselves. When we use it in this way, it suggests that there was a lot to be done or that it was difficult but that we managed to finish it:
I got all my work done yesterday.

- We occasionally use the causative have and get when the subject of have/get does not cause the action to happen but is an unwilling victim. It is generally used in this way with verbs denoting crimes:

I had/got my bag stolen last week.

PRACTICE BANK

A. In five of these sentences there is a mistake in a verb form. Underline each mistake and write the correction.

1. The children wanted to be allow to stay up late and see the fireworks. to be allowed
2. Our flight was delaying by fog and we missed our connection. _____
3. Lauren was sulking because she hadn't been invited to Ralph's party. _____
4. By the time we arrived at the market the best fruit had be sold. _____
5. While the meal was being prepare we had a drink on the terrace. _____
6. The new library will be opened by the Mayor next Saturday. _____
7. I can't see any coffee in this cupboard. Was it all been finished? _____

B. Fill in the gaps with the correct passive form of the verb in brackets.

1. A government minister was found (find) guilty of fraud yesterday.
2. It was a lovely surprise to find all the washing-up _____ (do) while I was asleep.
3. These souvenirs _____ (make) by children from the local school.
4. I didn't come here in order _____ (make) a fool of!
5. The votes _____ (count) right now and we should know the result before midnight.
6. This parcel appears _____ (open) before it _____ (delivered).
7. As he _____ (sack) from his previous job, he found it hard to get another.
8. The judges still have to decide which design _____ (award) the top prize.

C. Read this report in the Cybernian News.

Victory for Cybernia

The victorious Cybernian Inter-galactic Forces report:

Yesterday we invaded Planet Upstart with a large force. We have completely crushed the year-old rebellion there. Our space ships have destroyed ninety per cent of the Upstart space fleet. A special Cybernian task force landed near the central communications building and captured it without difficulty. We immediately broadcast a message to the population announcing that we had liberated them from the illegal Upstart government and we called on them to cooperate with the new government of their planet. We have arrested the rebel leaders and we are taking them back to Cybernia where the government will put them on trial.

D. Fill in the gaps below with the passive form of the verbs in the Cybernian News above.

Defeat for Upstarts

Yesterday our planet was invaded (Invade) (1) by a large force from Cybernia. Our year-old rebellion _____ (crush) (2). Ninety percent of our space fleet _____ (destroy) (3). The central communications building _____ (capture) (4) by a special Cybernian task force without difficulty and a message _____ (broadcast) (5) announcing that we _____ (liberate) (6), and we _____ (call on) (7) to cooperate with our new government. Our leaders _____ (arrest) (8) and they _____ (take) (9) to Cybernia where they _____ (put) (10) on trial.

E. Match the two halves of the conversations and fill in the gaps with the correct form of the verbs in brackets.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. I thought those chairs were broken. <u>e</u> | a. I _____ (have/ colour). |
| 2. Your bike's got a flat tyre! _____ | b. Yes, you need _____. (have/ take in). |
| 3. This carpet's filthy. _____ | c. I can _____ (have/ fix) at the cycle shop. |
| 4. What's happened to your hair? _____ | d. I agree - we should _____ (have/ redecorate). |
| 5. I don't like this room. It's too dark. _____ | e. I've <u>had them mended</u> (have/ mend). |
| 6. These jeans are much too loose. _____ | f. At the garage. We _____ (have/ service) before we go away. |
| 7. What a beautiful garden! _____ | g. We must _____ (have/ clean). |
| 8. Where's the car? _____ | h. Thank you. We _____ (have/ design) by an expert. |

F. Rewrite the sentences, putting the underlined verbs into the passive. Make any other changes necessary.

1. They should have given us this information ages ago.
This information should have been given to us ages ago.
2. Do you want someone to wake you up in the morning?
Do you want to be woken up in the morning?
3. I don't like someone telling me what to do.

4. The windows are really dirty: no-one's cleaned them for weeks.

5. After the company made him redundant, he became very depressed.

6. I would like them to have given me the chance to explain my point of view, but they weren't interested.

7. I'm hoping they will choose me for the college football team.

8. People believe that many more people will die of skin cancer over the next ten years.

9. If it hadn't rained so much, we would have finished the job on time.

10. We can't take the car: the people at the garage are repairing it.

G. In your notebook, rewrite the following texts, putting the underlined verbs into the passive and making any other changes that are necessary. Use by + agent where appropriate.

1. The company is sorry to announce that the situation has forced it to introduce a range of cost-cutting measures as from the beginning of the New Year. Unfortunately, we can no longer provide free tea and coffee. Someone is going to install new coin-operated drinks machines in every department and you can purchase a wide range of drinks from these. We will also stop overtime payments after the end of this month and we will expect all members of staff to complete their duties within their contract hours. You must no longer make personal calls from office phones and we request you to use the pay phone in the basement for this purpose.

2. Fire almost completely destroyed the Royal Hotel last night. By the time someone called the Fire Brigade, the hotel was already blazing. Ambulances took fifteen people to hospital suffering from severe burns. They say that seven of them are in a serious condition. People think that a discarded cigarette started the fire.

Example: The Royal Hotel was almost completely destroyed by fire last night. By the time the Fire Brigade was/ were called, ...

3. Jane is talking to her friend Greg about her holiday.

G: So, how was the holiday?

J: Oh, it was fantastic. They organized everything so well. As soon as we arrived at the airport, our courier met us and took us to the hotel. Someone had cleaned all the rooms beautifully and put fresh flowers on the tables.

G: Oh, how lovely. And what about the food?

J: It was excellent. They freshly prepared it all in the hotel and they even made the bread in the hotel kitchen. They served the bread rolls hot every morning with breakfast.

G: Mm, it does sound good. I must say, I'd like someone to cook my meals for me for a couple of weeks. And what about the surrounding area? Was that nice?

J: Oh beautiful. There were trips every day and they showed us all the local sights. There was so much history to see. You'd love it there, honestly.

H. Put the verbs in brackets into the correct tense and form. Some of the verbs should be in the passive and some in the active. Write the answers in the spaces provided below the text.

Animals on the roads

More cars and lorries 1 are being driven (drive) on our roads every year and, sadly, as a result of this, more and more wild animals 2 _____ (kill) by vehicles. Roads often 3 _____ (cross) the routes that 4 _____ (take) by animals when they are migrating, breeding or feeding. Every spring, many thousands of toads 5 _____ (kill) as they 6 _____ (make) their way to the traditional breeding ponds. All over the world, animals are victims of the road and their dead remains can 7 _____ (often see) lying on the roadside. Many badgers and hedgehogs 8 _____ (hit) by cars at night as they 9 _____ (move around) in search of food. Rabbits sometimes seem to 10 _____ (hypnotize) by the headlights of cars and 11 _____ (not move) quickly out of the way. Birds 12 _____ (sometimes hit) too as they 13 _____ (fly) low over roads. 14 _____ (can anything do) to protect these animals from the dangers of the road? Well, in 1969, a toad tunnel 15 _____ (build) in Switzerland and was a great success. Since then, other tunnels 16 _____ (construct) elsewhere in Europe, not just for toads but for badgers and salamanders too. In Florida, where the rare Florida panther 17 _____ (live), panther tunnels 18 _____ (build) under the highway and fencing 19 _____ (put up) beside the highway to guide the animals safely into these underpasses. Road signs warning drivers to 20 _____ (look out) for particular animals 21 _____ (often see) in the US and it is to 22 _____ (hope) that they 23 _____ (become) a more common sight on the roads of Europe.

I. Rewrite the words underlined using have or get + object + past participle.

1. There's a photographer over there. Why don't we ask her to take our picture?
Why don't we have/get our picture taken?
2. I've finally decided to arrange for someone to pierce my nose.
I've finally decided to have/get my nose pierced.
3. There's a leak in the roof. We should arrange for someone to repair it.

4. What time is it? I'm afraid someone hasn't repaired my watch yet.

5. Someone is going to redecorate the kitchen for us next month.

6. If I were you, I'd ask someone to fell that tree. It shuts out all the light.

7. I'm having a bit of trouble with my eyes at the moment so someone's going to test them next week.

8. I love someone massaging my shoulders.

9. The dentist hasn't checked my teeth this year.

10. The baby was crying because someone was washing her hair.

11. He looks much younger. I think someone's dyed his hair.

12. I don't know if I've passed the course because the tutors haven't marked all my work yet.

13. That wasps' nest is dangerous. You must ask someone to remove it.

CONSTRUCTIONS AFTER WISH

• With past simple.

To express dissatisfaction with a present situation or repeated habitual activity, use wish + past simple:

I wish she didn't ... (but she does)

I wish she did ... (but she doesn't)

I wish she spoke French. (but she doesn't. I would very much like her to.)

With the verb to be, use was or were after I/She/He/It. Were is a little more formal:

I wish the weather was/were a bit warmer. (but it isn't)

• With would.

To express dissatisfaction and annoyance about something that we would like to be different but that we do not expect to be different.

When we use it to refer to a person, it suggests that the person refuses to change:

I wish she would speak French. (but she won't. She can speak French but she refuses to speak it.)

I wish it would stop raining. (but it won't. I do not expect it to stop.)

• With past perfect.

To express regret about the past, use wish + past perfect:

I wish I had studied harder. (but I didn't and now I regret it.)

Notes:

• We can use **if only ...** in place of **I wish ...**. It also expresses dissatisfaction and regret. It is somewhat stronger than wish: If only I hadn't said that.

• **Wish + to-infinitive** is a more formal way of saying **I want to ...** or **I would like to ...**. It is used in formal spoken language or in writing: The management wish to inform you that ...

J. Rewrite the sentences using I wish + past simple, past perfect or would.

1. I haven't got a car. I would very much like to have one. I wish I had a car.

2. I went to bed late last night. I regret it now. I wish I hadn't gone to bed late last night.

3. We don't live in a nice big flat. I would like us to.

4. I didn't buy that dress. I regret it now.

5. He won't stop shouting. I would like him to.

6. I lost my temper. I regret it now.

7. You didn't tell me the truth. I am very sorry that you didn't.

8. You're playing that music. I would like you to stop playing it but I don't expect that you will.

9. I didn't go to that concert. I regret it now.

10. I don't have an interesting job. I would like my job to be more interesting.

11. My family live a long way from here. I would like them to live nearer to me.

12. You're not listening to me. I feel annoyed about it and I would like you to listen to me but I don't think you will.

13. I am not with him now. I would very much like to be.

14. I spent all my money on that new coat. I regret it now.