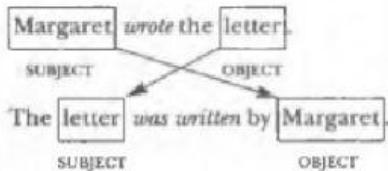


## PROBLEMS WITH PASSIVE VERBS

Sentences in which the error is an incorrect passive are common in the Written Expression section of the TOEFL test. You therefore need to be able to recognize the correct form of the passive and to be able to determine when a passive verb rather than an active verb is needed in a sentence.

The difference between an active and a passive verb is that the subject in an active sentence *does* the action of the verb, and the subject in a passive sentence *receives* the action of the verb. To convert a sentence from active to passive, two changes must be made. (1) The subject of the active sentence becomes the object of the passive sentence, while the object of the active sentence becomes the subject of the passive sentence. (2) The verb in the passive sentence is formed by putting the helping verb *be* in the same form as the verb in the active sentence and then adding the past participle of this verb.



The first example is an active sentence. To convert this active sentence to a passive sentence, you must first make the subject of the active sentence, *Margaret*, the object of the passive sentence with *by*. The object of the active sentence, *letter*, becomes the subject of the passive sentence. Next, the passive verb can be formed. Because *wrote* is in the past tense in the active sentence, the past tense of *be* (*was*) is used in the passive sentence. Then the verb *wrote* in the active sentence is changed to the past participle *written* in the passive sentence.

It should be noted that in a passive sentence, *by + object* does not need to be included to have a complete sentence. The following are both examples of correct sentences.

The letter was written yesterday *by Margaret*.  
The letter was written yesterday.

Notice that these passive sentences are correct if *by Margaret* is included (as in the first example) or if *by Margaret* is omitted (as in the second example).

### Savage Chickens

by Doug Savage



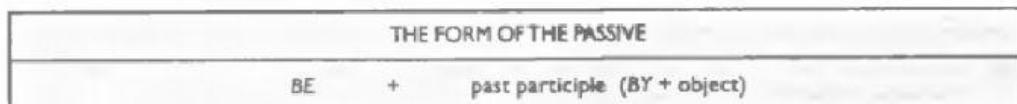
### **SKILL 37: USE THE CORRECT FORM OF THE PASSIVE**

One way that the passive can be tested on the TOEFL test is simply with an incorrect form of the passive. The following are examples of passive errors that might appear on the TOEFL test:

The portrait *was painted*\* by a famous artist.  
The project *will be finished*\* by Tim.

In the first example, the passive is formed incorrectly because the past participle *painted* should be used rather than the present participle *painting*. In the second example, the verb *be* has not been included, and some form of *be* is necessary for a passive verb. The verb in the second sentence should be *will be finished*.

The following chart outlines the way to form the passive correctly:



My father waters the plants



The plants are watered by my father

### Sujeto Paciente

verbo "to be"  
en el tiempo  
verbal de la  
activa

verbo  
"water" en  
participio  
pasado

### Complemento agente



This house was built in 1961.

**Was built** is passive.

Compare active and passive:

Somebody **built** this house in 1961. (active)

This house **was built** in 1961. (passive)  
*subject*

TENSE	ACTIVE	PASSIVE
Present Simple	I <b>make</b> a cake.	A cake <b>is</b> made.
Present Continuous	I <b>'m making</b> a cake.	A cake <b>is being</b> made.
Past Simple	I <b>made</b> a cake.	A cake <b>was</b> made.
Past Continuous	I <b>was making</b> a cake.	A cake <b>was being</b> made.
Present Perfect	I <b>have made</b> a cake.	A cake <b>has been</b> made.
Past Perfect	I <b>had made</b> a cake.	A cake <b>had been</b> made.
Future Simple	I <b>will make</b> a cake.	A cake <b>will be</b> made.
Future be going to	I <b>'m going to</b> make a cake.	A cake <b>is going to be</b> made.
Modal	I <b>must make</b> a cake.	A cake <b>must be</b> made.
Modal Perfect	I <b>should have made</b> a cake.	A cake <b>should have been</b> made.

The following chart outlines the way to form the passive correctly:

THE FORM OF THE PASSIVE		
BE	+	past participle (BY + object)

**EXERCISE 37:** Each of the following sentences has a passive meaning. Underline twice the verbs that should be passive. Then indicate if the sentences are correct (C) or incorrect (I).

- I 1. The boy had never be stung by a bee.
- C 2. The suits were hung in the closet when they were returned from the cleaners.
3. Money is lending by the credit union to those who want to buy homes.
4. The record had been chose by dancers near the jukebox.
5. The topic for your research paper should have been approved by your advisor.
6. That song has been playing over and over again by Steve.
7. Their utility bills have been increased again and again.
8. The patients who are too sick to sit up are being assisted by the orderlies.
9. The offices were thoroughly clean last evening by the night crew.
10. The car that was struck in the intersection yesterday is being repaired today.