

# THE PASSIVE VOICE

## 1 USE

We often use **the passive** when we want to **talk about an action** rather than the person or thing that does the action. In other words, the **action is more important than who carries it out**.

## 2 FORM

We use a form of **be + past participle** of the verb. The object of the **active** becomes the subject of the **passive** verb:

active verb + **object**

*They **buy** their clothes in the sales.*

**subject** + passive verb

***Their clothes are bought** in the sales.*



**Passive voice** produces a sentence in which **the subject receives** an action.

In contrast, **active voice** produces a sentence in which **the subject performs** an action.

# THE PASSIVE VOICE

## 3 REASONS FOR USING THE PASSIVE

We use the passive when...

- **it doesn't matter who does the action**

*The votes **will be counted** at the end of the meeting.*

- **we know or can guess who does the action**

*John **is being operated** on. (obviously by a surgeon.)*

- **we don't know (or don't want to say) who does the action**

*My bicycle **has been stolen**. (I don't know who stole it.)*

- **we want to talk about general feelings, beliefs or rules**

*Smoking **is not allowed** in this room. (It's a rule.)*

*Swimming **is said** to be the best form of exercise. (Many people say this.)*

**Remember:** If we want to say who or what does the action when using a passive verb, we use **by + person/thing**. We usually put this at the end of the clause or sentence:

Example: *This dress was designed **by Giorgio Armani**.*



# ACTIVITIES

## ACTIVITY 1

Study how to make the passive for the tenses below. Then, transform the sentences from the active into the passive.

### Passive voice – all tenses

Verb tense	Active voice	Passive voice
Present simple	They <b>take</b> the photos in Africa	The photos <b>are taken</b> in Africa
Present continuous	They <b>are taking</b> the photos in Africa	The photos <b>are being taken</b> in Africa
Present perfect	They <b>have taken</b> the photos in Africa	The photos <b>have been taken</b> in Africa
Past simple	They <b>took</b> the photos in Africa	The photos <b>were taken</b> in Africa
Past continuous	They <b>were taking</b> the photos in Africa	The photos <b>were being taken</b> in Africa
Past perfect	They <b>had taken</b> the photos in Africa	The photos <b>had been taken</b> in Africa
Future simple	They <b>will take</b> the photos in Africa	The photos <b>will be taken</b> in Africa
Be going to	They <b>are going to take</b> the photos in Africa	The photos <b>are going to be taken</b> in Africa
Future perfect	They <b>will have taken</b> the photos in Africa	The photos <b>will have been taken</b> in Africa

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1. They were painting that wall yesterday.

*That wall* \_\_\_\_\_

2. We've turned off the lights.

*The lights* \_\_\_\_\_

3. We will send you an email tomorrow.

*You* \_\_\_\_\_

4. Do I have to fill in this form?

*Does this form* \_\_\_\_\_ ?

5. They haven't repaired your computer yet.  
*Your computer* \_\_\_\_\_
6. They're going to close the road for 24 hours.  
*The road* \_\_\_\_\_
7. They aren't making that model any more.  
*That model* \_\_\_\_\_

## ACTIVITY 2

Use the information in the email to complete the sentences below.

The image shows a windowed email application. The subject line is 'Wedding plans!'. The message body contains a greeting, a detailed description of wedding arrangements, and a closing. The text is as follows:

Hi Hilary  
I'm so pleased that you can come to our wedding! Jake and I have planned everything over the last few weeks. At the moment we're sending out all the final invitations. (Don't worry, I haven't invited Jane Anderson. I know you don't get on with her!) I was a bit worried about the cost but last month Mum and Dad agreed to pay for the reception. They paid the deposit last week. That was a relief! Have you decided what to wear yet? I've bought my wedding dress (it's a bit big so I have to alter it). The shop had reduced the price so it was only a few hundred pounds.  
Do you remember Aunt Terri? Apparently she's got a fantastic new video camera, so she's going to film the ceremony. We've got a professional photographer as well. She'll take the formal photos. And Antonio from the Italian restaurant is doing the catering, so the food should be great!  
I can't wait to see you there. It's going to be a great day!  
Lucy 😊

- 0 Everything *has been planned* by Jake and Lucy.
- 1 The final invitations \_\_\_\_\_ at the moment.
- 2 Jane Anderson \_\_\_\_\_ to the wedding.
- 3 The deposit for the reception \_\_\_\_\_ last week.
- 4 Lucy has bought her wedding dress but it has \_\_\_\_\_.
- 5 The price of the dress \_\_\_\_\_ by the shop.
- 6 The ceremony \_\_\_\_\_ by Lucy's aunt.
- 7 The formal photos \_\_\_\_\_ by a professional photographer.
- 8 The catering \_\_\_\_\_ by Antonio.