

When do I use the passive?

1 Tick the correct sentence in each pair.

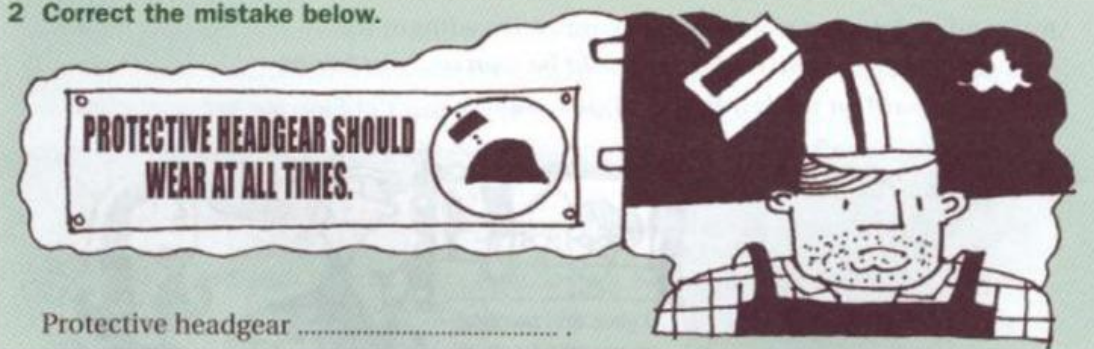
- 1 a Many people have been died because of this disease.
b Many people have died because of this disease.
- 2 a This data took from 1982 and 1992.
b This data was taken from 1982 and 1992.

With active verbs we usually use the following order: subject + verb + object. We use the passive when we want to put the object of the verb first: object + verb. Compare:
The teacher told the students to close their books. = active (subject + verb + object)
The students were told to close their books. = passive (object + verb)

We use the passive:

- when we want to make the object the focus of the sentence: *The books were sold for a small profit at the school.* (the focus is on the books, not the person selling them)
 ☆ Note that the verb (*were*) agrees with the object (*the books*).
- when the context tells us who carried out the action: *A law was introduced to help protect people in this situation.* (we know that the government did this)
- when it is not important who carried out the action: *In the factory, the shoes are cleaned and packed into boxes ready for sale.* (we do not need to know who does this)
 ☆ Note that we can include the 'subject' by adding *by* + the person/group: *A lot of waste materials could be recycled by large manufacturers.*

2 Correct the mistake below.



3 Change the following sentences from active to passive. You will not need to change the tense. You will need to decide when to leave out the subject.

- 1 A factory worker checks each box for quality. *Each box*
- 2 The government does not permit children under 16 to work. *Children*
- 3 The washing machine is washing your clothes at the moment. *Your clothes*
- 4 A mechanic will repair your car this afternoon. *Your car*
- 5 The agent has sold our house at last. *Our house*
- 6 Something tore the back of my coat. *The back of my coat*
- 7 The employer pays the staff more for working at the weekend. *The staff*
- 8 Burning tyres give off highly toxic chemicals. *Highly toxic chemicals*