Grammar UNIT 2

OVERVIEW

1 FORM OF THE PASSIVE

We form the passive using be in an appropriate tense or form + the past participle of a transitive verb:
A small sum of money ***was stolen*** *from the cash box.*
They ***ought to have been punished*** *more severely.*
Having been beaten *in the semi-final, she flew home the next day*

- *In spoken English, we sometimes use get instead of be in the passive:*
  They got told off *for making so much noise.*
- *However, get + -ed is more common with an active meaning similar to become' in phrases like get dressed, get married, etc. (See Section 3.2).*

2 REASONS FOR USING THE PASSIVE

In English, the topic or subject matter is commonly at the beginning of the sentence, and new information about the subject is normally at the end.

- In an active sentence, the 'agent' (the person or thing that performs the action) usually comes first and is the subject of the sentence:
-

Subject (Agent)	**Action**	**Result**
the first goal	**was scored**	**by Olympiakos.**

This passive sentence is principally about the goal.

We choose between active and passive because of the topic we are talking about, especially when reporting information. An English newspaper, assuming its readers are interested in the England football team, makes the England team the topic. It is likely to report:
England have been beaten by Germany in a penalty shoot-out.
A German newspaper, more interested in their own national team, is likely to report:
Germany has beaten England in a penalty shoot-out.

Other reasons for using the passive include:

- the agent is unknown or obvious (see also Section 1):
  I **was born** in 1982.
  Coffee **will be made available** after the meal.
- The agent is 'people or things in general'.
  Some verbs **cannot be used** in the Continuous.
- the agent is a long phrase:
  Helen was surprised **by all the messages of sympathy that she received.**
- avoiding references to ourselves and making a statement impersonal:

We **can't** possibly **complete** this work overnight.
becomes: This work **can**'t possibly **be completed** overnight.
(= the work is the problem, not us)

- avoiding 'you' in orders and rules:
  You must give in your application before the end of the week. becomes: All applications **must be given in** before the end of the week.
- in factual writing when the focus is usually on events, achievements, etc. rather than agents:
  Vaccination **had been pioneered** two hundred years earlier.



WATCH OUT!

- Not all be + -ed forms are passive, They may be adjectives:
  I was worried we would be late because of the traffic.
- We avoid passive constructions with be being or been being, although they sometimes occur in spoken English:
  Avoid: ~~The road will have been being repaired for months.~~
  ✓ They **will have been repairing** the road for months.
  or: The road **will have been under repair** for months.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

SECTION 1

Agents and objects with the passive

1 THE AGENT

Not mentioning the agent

In most passive sentences we have no interest in who or what performs the action. We are interested in the action itself, who or what is affected by the action, or What is the result of it (see Overview). In fact, only about 20% of passive sentences mention the agent:

That window **has been broken** again!

Mentioning the agent

We mention the agent when we think the information is important, especially if we want to say more about it, for example with a relative clause:

> I remember **being taken** to the fair **by my father**, who rarely showed any interest in such things.
> The survivors **were picked** out of the water by a cruise liner which had heard their distress call.

• The agent is usually introduced with by (See Section 6.3 for prepositions after passives).

2 VERBS WITH TWO OBJECTS

Verbs that have two objects (usually a person and a thing) in the active usually have two passive forms because either of the objects can become the new subject:

They gave **the award to an unknown actress**.
(= active)
The award was given to an unknown actress.
(= passive)
An unknown actress was given the award.
(= passive)

✓ We usually add a preposition before the personal object. The preposition is usually to, but we sometimes use for.
A note **was handed to** the minister.
A slice of cake **was cut for** him.

- However, some verbs, e.g. allow, ask, cause, forgive, deny, don't normally take a preposition before the personal object:

Permission **was refused** him.

3 VERBS WITH LIMITED USE IN THE PASSIVE

We can't use some verbs as freely in the passive as others.

- We can't use intransitive verbs in the passive because they don't have an object that can be changed into the subject:
~~The Tasmanian tiger **was died out** early this century~~.
The Tasmanian tiger **died out** early this century.

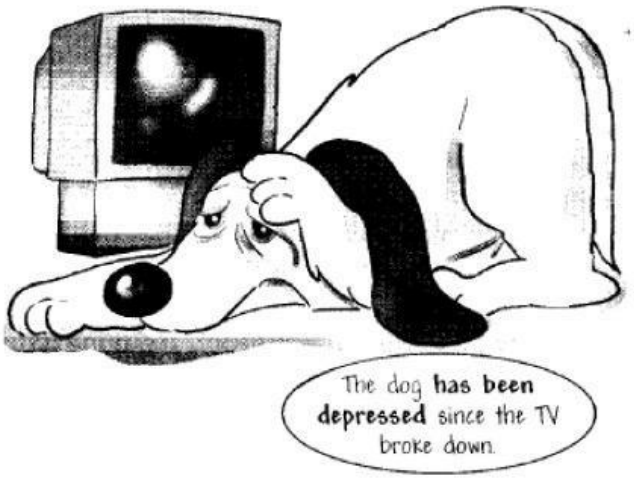
- Some verbs, e.g. suggest and explain, can't change the indirect object to subject:
~~He was explained the procedure.~~
~~We were suggested a new time~~.
The procedure **was explained to him**.
A new time **was suggested for us**.

- Some verb phrases with two objects can't passive at all:

I **bear him no ill will**.
The book **earned him a fortune.**
Let me **wish you luck**.

• Some verbs are followed by two nouns, but the second is not really an object. We can see this if it is replaced by an adjective:

They declared **him President**.
He was declared **President.**
The doctor declared **him dead**.
He was declared **dead.**



? CHECK

Correct the following sentences.

a Man and wife they were pronounced.
b I was explained What I had to do.
c His previous misdemeanours were forgiven to him.
d He was earned a lot of money from his betting.
We were suggested a good restaurant for lunch.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

PRACTICE 1

1. Fill each of the gaps in the following sentences with one of the passive verb phrases below.

is deemed - could soon be fitted - were charged - has been held - has finally been elected - is expected - being caused - to be printed - is auctioned - being considered

a High-tech 'leg-irons' _____ on violent suspects arrested by the police, under plans _____ by chief constables.

b Last week, police in Scotland called for the introduction of leg-restraints following concerns about the number of injuries _____ during struggles in the back of police cars and vans.

c Four people _____ last night with public disorder offences after officers mounted dawn raids on suspected football hooligans.

d Hugh Hefner, founder of 'Playboy', _____ to the American Society of Magazine Editors' Hall of Fame.

e A first edition copy of Chaucer's 'Canterbury Tales', the first book _____ in England, to raise at least 500,000 when it_____ in July.

f A British woman released early from an attempted murder sentence in the Unites States — a charge which she has always denied — _____ in prison because she _____ an illegal immigrant.

2. Add the appropriate extra information (a - e) to the passive sentences (1 - 5).

1. The news was leaked to the press by the minister …
2. The minister was attacked by protesters, …
3. I remember being sent a letter by a man in America …
4. The winning goal was scored by Fausto Ferrini …
5. A man was run over by a car, …

a. in his first appearance for the club.
b. who had waited outside the building all day to voice their opposition to the policies.
c. in a deliberate attempt to boost his popularity.
d. who complained my article was prejudiced against his country.
e. which witnesses said was being driven at very high speed.

3. Where possible, rewrite each of the following sentences in two different ways, using a different subject each time. Some sentences may be rewritten only one way.

a. The police showed the victim a picture of the suspect.
b. People used to sell the tourists fake antiques.
c. Why didn't they offer the customers a refund?
d. They didn't guarantee every participant a free lunch.
e. They reported the incident to the police-
f. People suggested to us that the Internet would be a good source of information.
g. They promised us full compensation if the scheme fell through.
h. The referee declared the boxing match a draw.
i. We'll give the new members of staff all the help they need.
j. The incident earned him the reputation of being unreliable.

4. Fill each of the numbered blanks in the following passage with one suitable word.

Twenty-four hours after arriving in the country, I _____ (l) told to leave. The security police, the country's largest employer, came to my hotel, politely asked me what I thought of the city and then recommended that I leave on the morning plane. I asked them why I was _____ (2) expelled and they said it was not a question of my being '_____ (3) out', they were simply recommending that I leave. [refused and the problems started. My passport and plane ticket _____ (4) stolen from my room after my key 'disappeared'. The police shrugged their shoulders and decided not to interview the leather-jacketed youth who I _____ (5) been pressed up against in the lift. For three days I was _____ (6) by two not very secret policemen everywhere I went. I visited a fellow-journalist whose address I had _____ (7) given. He lived in a beautiful old house which would _____ (8) demolished the following year by the government to make way for a block of 'modern' flats. Everybody would be _____ (9) in it as soon as it was ready but where they would live in the meantime had not been _____ (10) out. Massive taxation was _____ (11) imposed on the people to pay for these supposed improvements. I went back to the hotel, still _____ (12) followed by the two policemen, and felt very depressed.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

SECTION 2

Infinitives and ***-ing*** *form passives*

1. INFINITIVES AFTER CERTAIN VERBS

Make, see, hear, and help have different patterns in the active and the passive. In the active, the verb is followed by object + infinitive without to. In the passive, we use a to-infinitive:

Active	**Passive**
I **heard him shout** at his brother.	He **was heard to shout** at his brother.
They'**ve made him promise** not to come before six.	He'**s been made to promise** not to come before six.

WATCH OUT!

Let vs. allow

We can't use let in the passive when it is followed by a verb phrase. We use allow:

My parents let me do What I wanted. (= active)

~~I was let to do what I wanted.~~

I. was **allowed to do** what I wanted.

• But we can use *let* in the passive in phrases like:

The dog **was let loose**. I **was** badly **let down**.

2. PASSIVE INFINITIVES

We form the passive infinitive of verbs by putting to be (sometimes to get) in front of the past participle:

Active	**Passive**
There's so much **to do**.	There's so much **to be done.**
I'**ve got to write** this essay before Friday.	This essay has got **to be written** before Friday
If I'**m going to do** it by then, I'd better get a move on.	If it's **going to be done** by then, I'd better get a move on.

• We use Perfect passive infinitives to emphasise that something is or isn't completed (See also Unit 1, Section 2 Watch out!):

My new car was **to have been delivered** today but there was a problem with the paintwork.

Active or passive infinitive?

• If the subject is the agent, the sentence is active and we use an active infinitive:

I've got so many library books **to return**.

• If the subject is not the agent, we use a passive infinitive:

All systems are **to be checked** as soon as possible.

• We can use some active and passive infinitives with the same meaning, especially after There:

There are so many rooms **to paint / to be painted**.

• But, with something, anything and nothing + to do there can be a change in meaning:

There's **nothing to do** in the evenings. (= we're bored) I'm sorry, there's **nothing to be done**. (= there's no action anyone can take)

3. REPORT VERBS

We often use report verbs, e.g. claim, mention, request, point out, with impersonal passive constructions.

There are three main patterns:

It's **thought by the press that** the chairman earns too much.

The chairman **is thought by the press** to earn too much. **There are thought to be** disagreements among senior ministers.

• We often introduce a statement with They say, think, believe, etc. or It is said... / One knows..., etc meaning 'People generally think, believe, etc...':

It's **thought that** carrots improve eyesight, (=Carrots **are believed** to improve eyesight.)

4. PASSIVE -ING FORMS

We use passive -ing forms (being + -ed) and Perfect passive -ing forms (having been + -ed):

• after verbs that are normally followed by -ing forms (see Unit 15):

I **love being given** flowers. She recalled **having been taken** there when she was young.

• as participles, usually with the meaning of 'because' (see Unit 6, Section 1):

Being paid monthly, I find annual bills hard to pay.

Having been stung by bees, she has no love of insects.

• as the subject of a sentence:

Being proved wrong is never a comfortable experience.

? CHECK

Underline the passives in these sentences.

1. They are believed to have left the country.
2. She is thought to have been smuggled out of the country in the back of a lorry.
3. They were seen to leave the room together.
4. He is said to be recovering well.
5. The whole place was cleaned until there was not a speck of dust to be seen anywhere.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

PRACTICE 2

1. Fill each of the blanks with a suitable word.

Example: New measures to combat crime *are* to *be* introduced at the end of the year.

a. We _____ strongly advised _____ reconsider our position.
b. He is known _____ hidden large sums of money in his orchard.
c. They are understood _____ have _____ offered over $5000 for their story
d. apologise to my little sister after an argument.
e. It's too late now: there's nothing more _____ be _____.
f. I left with the distinct feeling of _____ been _____ for granted.
g. I used to steal walnuts from my grandfather's garden and never worried about _____ out.
h. There are _____ any survivors from yesterday's air crash.

2. Finish each of the following sentences in such a way that it is as similar as possible to the sentence before it.

Example: Many people believe that Stonehenge was built as some kind of time-keeping device.
Stonehenge *is believed by many people to have been built as some kind of time-keeping device*.

a They made me tell them everything I knew.
I_____.
b Nobody ever let me study the piano at school.
I _____.
c It is often said that Shakespeare never revised anything he wrote.
Shakespeare _____
_____.
d There were once thought to be canals on Mars.
It _____.
e From What we understand, there was an attack last night in the Vicinity of the beach.
There is _____
_____.
f It's a widespread assumption that George was wrongly accused.
George _____
_____.
g You have to clean these boots until they shine.
These football boots are _____
_____.
h Under no circumstances should you cross this line.
This line is _____
_____.

3. For each of the sentences, write a new sentence as similar as possible in meaning to the original sentence, but using the word given.

Example: A lot of people are saying that he's working undercover. ***rumoured***
It's rumoured that he's working undercover. / *He's rumoured to be working undercover.*

a She wants it to be Clear to people that she's fair. ***seen***
_____.
b He often says to people how much of his success is down to you. ***heard***
_____.
c The theory is that she fell overboard at night and drowned. ***fallen***
_____.
d We certainly don't want any repetition of such a ridiculous spectacle ever again. ***repeated***
_____.
e The plan was originally to complete the building by June. ***due***
_____.
f When I was a child, I was never allowed to play with the children next door. ***let***
_____.

4. Finish each of the following sentences in such a way that it is as similar as possible to the sentence before it.

Example: He didn't remember that he had been ordered to appear before the judge.
He had no recollection of *being ordered to appear before the judge.*

a She vaguely remembers that she was knocked down by a motorbike.
She has vague memories of _____
_____.
b It's never very nice when people laugh at you.
Being _____.
_____.
c Stewart was criticised for his extravagance and was more careful after that.
Having _____.
_____.
d I really wish r hadn't been pushed into giving a speech.
I really regret _____
_____.
e I was told it was quicker, I naturally took the mountain road.
Having _____
_____.
f I can't tell you What it feels like because nobody's ever given me $1000,000.
Never _____
_____.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

SECTION 3

Structures with get and have

1. CAUSATIVES

We can use get and have in both active and passive patterns.

• The active pattern, meaning 'cause or order someone to do something', is get + person + to-infinitive, *or* have + person + infinitive without to:

I'll get the waiter **to bring** you the menta.
I'll have the waiter **bring** you the menu.
Note that *have* is much more common in American English; *get* is common in spoken British English.

• The passive pattern, meaning 'arrange for somebody else to do something', *is* get / have + object + past participle:

I'll have/ get the menu **brought** to you.
I **had to get / have** my jacket **cleaned** after the party.
I must go an **get / have** my photo taken for my new passport.
I'll get / have those copies **made** for you immediately.
She's **getting / having** her teeth **fixed**.

2. GET + -ED. ACTIVE AND PASSIVE

We can sometimes use *get* instead of *be* in the passive. This is usually informal:

They **got punished** by the Principal for making so much noise.
Lucky Paul got **promoted/ elected / chosen / appointed** yesterday.
Poor Vassili - his dog **got run over** last night.

• *Get* meaning 'become' is also common with a particular small group of past participles:

get dressed - get married - get used to - get stuck - get lost - get caught - get burned - get involved

• The meaning of these phrases can be active:

I **got dressed** as quickly as I could.

• We can use some of these active phrases with an object:

I have to **get the children dressed** early every morning.
Don't **get your family involved** in the business.

3. THINGS THAT HAPPEN TO YOU

We use *have + object + past participle* to describe things that happen to us, often misfortunes. The subject is the person who experiences what happened:

I've **had** my car **stolen**. (Compare: My car **was stolen**.)
He's **had** his application for citizenship **turned down**.
(Compare: His application for citizenship **has been turned down.**

My mother's **had** her letter **published** in The Times. (Compare: My mother's letter **has been published** in The Times.)

• In spoken English we can sometimes use get instead of have:

She's **got** another letter **published** in The Times.

• Note that sometimes only the context will identify precise meaning. Consider:

They **had** their fence **pulled down**. (= either: they employed somebody to pull it down (causative); *or* it was pulled down without their planning it, e.g. by vandals.)



? CHECK

Which of these sentences are causatives?

1 He tried to escape but got caught.
2 They were aiming to walk the entire route but got tired in the end.
3 I need to get my hair cut.
4 I'm going to have my portrait painted.
5 I had my car broken into last week.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

PRACTICE 3

1. Fill each of the numbered blanks in the passage below with a form of have or be.

It was last May, while we were taking our annual late-spring break on Lindos that we _____ (1) our house broken into. All our TV and video equipment _____ (2) stolen, but What was worse was when we discovered that the final draft of my husband's latest novel _____ (3) _____ (4) torn into pieces and the disks he _____ (5) _____ (6) writing it on disappeared. Of course, you hear about people who _____ (8) _____(9) their properties vandalised and others whose most prized possessions _____ (10) _____ (11) taken, but it's a terrible shock when it happens to you, when you know that your home _____ (12) _____ (13) invaded, and that you _____ (14) _____ (15) your most intimate belongings handled and examined by strangers.

2. Finish each of the following sentences in such a way that it is as similar as possible in meaning to the sentence before it.

Example: Hasn't that film been developed yet?
Haven't you had the film developed yet?

a Can it be true that you're really going to deliver my sofa today?
Can it be true that I'm _____
_____.

b One of the others agreed to post my letters for me.
I got _____
_____.

c My dentist is supposed to be capping my two front teeth this morning.
I'm _____
_____.

d My car really needs servicing.
I really _____
_____.

e Why did you let them go without signing the receipt?
Why didn't you _____
_____.

3. Fill the blanks with a suitable word or phrase.

Example: His arm is in a sling after he **got** it **stamped** on.

a. I keep getting headaches so I'm going _____ tested.
b. It's unpleasant for children when they _____ names by other children.
c. I've just _____ taken for my new passport.
d. My handbag was completely flattened after it_____ on in the bus.
e. My husband's been to the hairdresser: I really wish he _____ so short.
f. I know you don't approve of my new hair colour but you'll just _____ to it.

4. For each of the following sentences, write a new sentence as similar as possible in meaning to the original sentence, but using the word given. The words must not be altered in any way.

Example: Computing is just something you take for granted after a while. ***get***
Computing is just something you get used to after a while.

a The whole of my sister's class spent last weekend redecorating her flat. ***had***
_____.

b We couldn't find our way out of the woods. ***got***
_____.

c Do you think there's any chance of this new party winning the election? ***get***
_____.

d I can't say I enjoy the teacher reading out my work in front of the class. ***having***
_____.

e It's quite simple for a locksmith to copy one or more of your keys. ***copied***
_____.

5. Rearrange the words to make coherent sentences inside the first and last words given.

Example: film to has just be → *That film has to be seen.*

a your ever your house belongings into any and had broken of you
Have _____
_____stolen?

b fingerprints police your on you never had files have can put you
Once _____
_____ relax.

c something get got have done just about this to office.
You _____
_____ office.

d your I not help would got have my for
But _____
_____ stamped.

e us organised get at can the everything of all same
All _____
_____ time.

f care any take to must such involved dangerous in family your not get
You _____
_____ situations.

g arrested taxed if will get you car be almost and certainly don't your
You _____
_____ insured.

h interest government seems to never to brought get under able rates be
The _____ control.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

SECTION 4

Not using the passive: transitive to Intransitive

1. CHANGING THE SUBJECT WITHOUT USING THE PASSIVE

With some transitive verbs we can change the subject of a sentence without using the passive. We don't mention or even imply an agent. Verbs that allow us to change the subject to 'the thing affected by the action' without using the passive are called 'ergative' verbs. By changing the subject of the sentence in this way, the active transitive verb becomes intransitive:

"**The dog** opened the door. active) **The door** was opened by the dog. (= passive) **The door opened**. (ergative — as if the door opened by itself)

• Here are more examples of ergative verbs:
The whistle **blew**. That jumper **does up** at the neck.
The car **crashed** into a post. The soup **thickened**.

2. MEANINGS OF THESE VERBS

Describing Change

Most verbs that we can use in this way describe change of some kind:

Transitive	**Non-passive intransitive**
This book **will change** your life.	His life **changed** completely when he moved to Denmark.
The sun **had dried** their clothes by the time they got home.	Their clothes **had dried** by the time they got home.
She **broke** her pencil because she was pressing too hard.	Her pencil **broke** because She was pressing too hard.

• Other examples include:
begin- vary - decrease - expand - increase - open close - finish - fade - stretch - crack - smash

WATCH OUT!

We can't use all verbs describing change in this way. For example, *destroy* and *demolish* must stay transitive:

~~The old building **demolished.**~~
They **demolished** the old building. The Old building **was demolished**.

Describing movement

Other verbs that we can use in this way describe movement of some kind:

Transitive	**Non-passive intransitive**
He **reversed** the car into the garage.	A car **reversed** round the corner.
The pilot **landed** the plane on only one engine.	The plane **landed** on time.
He **moved** his chair closer to hers.	That new restaurant has moved.

• Other examples include:
turn - stop - shake - spin - sail - tip - shift – bounce

Cooking

Another group of verbs that we can use in this way relate to cooking:

Transitive	**Non-passive intransitive**
Dissolve the mixture in a little water	Stir until the sugar **has dissolved**.
Simmer the stock for an hour.	After the stock **has simmered** for an hour, add seasoning.

• Other examples include:
bake - boil - cook - fly - melt - toast – thicken - burn - heat up - cool down - warm – brown - freeze – thaw

3. OTHER EXAMPLES OF ERGATIVE VERBS

She **photographs** very well. (= she is photogenic)
Her voice **records** well. (= her voice sounds good on tape)
Will this stain **wash out**? (= Will the stain disappear with washing?)
Your composition **reads** well. (=your style is very good)
Black jeans **are selling** well. (= many people are buying them)
This skirt **creases** so easily. (= the skirt becomes creased very quickly)

? CHECK

Which of the following sentences are incorrect?
a The light has destroyed the photograph.
b Raise your hand if you know the answer.
c The photograph destroyed because of the light.
d The photograph was destroyed in the fire.
e The treasure was raised to the surface.
f The hot air balloon raised quickly into the sky.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

PRACTICE 4

1. In the following pairs of sentences, a, b or both are correct. Put a cross (X) next to every sentence that is incorrect. Write the correction.

Example: a Drop a line when you get there.
b He was upset to discover he dropped from the team. (X) (had been/ was dropped)

1 a The Titanic was sunk by an iceberg.
b The boat sank without trace.
2 a This shirt dries extremely quickly.
b Her hair soon dried by the wind.
3 a The hole soon filled with water.
b The room was filled with hundreds of people.
4 a The western shore washed by warm currents.
b Fertile soil washes down into the valleys.
5 a My dress ripped when it caught in the car door.
b His newspaper had been ripped into shreds.
6 a The sacked workers compensated for the loss of earnings.
b He was compensated for his injuries.
7 a My chair tipped backwards until it fell over.
b All the left-overs were tipped into a bin liner.
8 a Inflation was increased over the last six months.
b My salary was increased by just over 5%.
9 a They've expanded production facilities at the old factory.
b Metal is expanded when heated.
10 a The white Mercedes turned into the car park.
b The sign had been turned to face the opposite direction.

2. Rewrite each of the following sentences changing the object to subject without using the passive. Add any prepositional phrases necessary.

Example: The sun has melted the chocolate.
The chocolate has melted in the sun.

a. The DJ dimmed the lights during the last dance.
_____
b. Darren improved his performance in the metres by a tenth of a second.
_____
c. An iceberg sank the Titanic in 1911.
_____
d. Tears filled his eyes.
_____
e. The committee gradually developed the plan.
_____

3. For each of the following sentences, write a new sentence as similar as possible in meaning to the original sentence, but using the word given.

Example: The first act of your play is very well written. **reads**
The first act of your play reads very well.

a Initially, I think you develop the plot very convincingly.
unfolds
_____
b You step up the tension in the third scene.
increases
_____
c But then everything seems different.
change
_____
d You put in melodrama instead of real drama, don't you?
replaces
_____
e Why do you close the first act with only a vague suspicion of murder in the air?
does
_____
f Why don't you open the second act with the actual killing?
doesn't
_____
g And why does the third act end on such an anti-climax?
do
_____
h It's difficult to See tickets being bought for a play like this.
selling
_____

4. 4. Fill each of the gaps in these extracts from a report with an appropriate word from the list.

Example: The amount we can spend on technical equipment has fortunately **increased**.

grown - expanded - fallen - contracted – widened - intensified folded - changed - dried (increased)

a. It's sad that the number of students considering a career in teaching has _____ off a lot.
b. Consequently, the teacher training faculty has _____ by about 25%.
c. Attitudes towards the teaching profession have _____ considerably.
d. However, in other departments options have _____ greatly.
e. Inevitably some departments have _____ completely.
f. Interest in Latin, for example, has _____ up.
g. And competition with other colleges has, it must be admitted, _____.
h. But, the curriculum has _____ into new areas such as media studies.
i. Interest in computer studies has _____ beyond all expectations.

LIVEWORKSHEETS