15 The passive
Forms, uses, and contexts

1 Some examples of **passive** sentences:
*English **is spoken** all over the world.*
*This product **was invented** in Sweden.*

2 We use this pattern to form the passive:

subject + be + past participle

(For details on forming past participles, see p. 14.)

3 The form of **be** is different for different verb tenses:

PRESENT SIMPLE PASSIVE
subject + am/is/are + past participle
I'm employed by a big company.

PRESENT CONTINUOUS PASSIVE
subject + am/is/are + being + past participle
The road is being repaired.

PAST SIMPLE PASSIVE
subject + was/were + past participle
It was made in China.

PAST CONTINUOUS PASSIVE
subject + was/were + being + past participle
People were being interviewed.

PRESENT PERFECT PASSIVE
subject + has/have + been + past participle
He has been given a new job.

MODAL PASSIVE
subject + modal + be + past participle
*Applications **must be received** before 12 May.*

GOING TO PASSIVE
subject + am/is/are going to + be + past participle
I'm not going to be chosen for the team.

Grammar in action

1 We use the passive when the person who 'does' the verb is not important or we don't know who 'does' the verb. The object of the verb is more important, so it becomes the subject of the sentence and we use a passive verb:

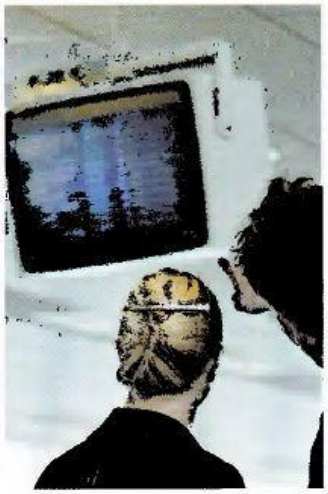


The college was built in 1947.
(= Some people built the college in 1947.)

Here, *the college* is the subject of the sentence because the man is talking about the college. He is not talking about who built the college, and he may not know who built it. He uses a passive verb because *the college* is not the subject of the verb (the college did not build anything).

2 We often use the passive in formal contexts, such as public information (rules, signs, brochures, etc.) and media reports:
Cycling is not permitted in this area. (*Cycling* is the subject of the rule, not who does not allow it.)
Bookings can be made online. (*Bookings* is the subject of the sentence, not the people making them).

A A bad journey



Complete this story about a journey, using the past simple passive or past continuous passive form of the verbs in brackets. You will need to use one past continuous passive form and one negative form.

The journey to Italy was terrible. First of all, I got to the airport quite late. I ..was driven.. [0] (drive) there in a taxi, but my taxi got stuck in traffic because the road ..... [1] (repair). When I got to the airport, I ..... [2] (tell) that there was a problem and the flight ..... [3] (delay). Then I ..... [4] (put) in a seat on the plane next to some very loud children. During the flight, we ..... [5] (give) a really horrible meal. When we landed, my bags ..... [6] (search) and this took a long time. Everything ..... [7] (take out) of them. When I came out of the airport, I was too late for the bus to my hotel. I had to get a taxi and I ..... [8] (charge) a lot of money for the journey. When I finally got to the hotel, all the staff were busy. I ..... [9] (show) to my room and I had to find it myself. It was a terrible way to start the trip.

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B Tonight's news

Complete these news stories, using the passive form of the correct verbs in the box. In each paragraph, use the same verb tense as the example.

leave	create	~~announce~~	complete
~~build~~	choose	show	name

New bridge planned for north

A new bridge is going to be built [0] in the north of the country next year. The plan .....[1] to the public in June and the work .....[2] within three years. Thousands of new jobs .....[3] in that part of the country.

World Cup shock

The national team for the World Cup has been announced [0] and it contains some surprises. Several new players .....[4] for the squad for the first time, a new captain .....[5] and a number of established players .....[6] out.

C Ordering online

Complete the information and instructions from a company's website, using the verbs in brackets and the passive forms given after each sentence.

0 All our products can be ordered (order) online. (can)
1 Orders ..... (make) 24 hours a day. (can)
2 All major credit cards ..... (accept). (present simple)
3 Orders ..... (deliver) within 14 days. (will)
4 A delivery address ..... (provide). (must)
5 Please wait. Your order ..... (process). (present continuous)
6 Your order ..... (send). (present perfect)

D Harry's party

Complete this conversation between two friends, using the words below it and the correct passive forms.

ADAM Where was this photograph taken [0] ? And .....[1] ?
IAN At Harry's party last week.
ADAM Oh. .....[2] to that.
IAN No, I know. .....[3] far in advance and .....[4] about it.
ADAM Was it a good party? .....[5] ?
IAN Only about 20 people came. But it was good fun.
ADAM What exactly is happening in this photograph?
IAN .....[6] in water and his friends are laughing.
ADAM Well, ...[7] if someone did that to me. But Harry deserves it!

0 Where/this photograph/take
1 when/it/take
2 I/not/invite
3 The party/not/plan
4 lots of people/not/tell
5 How many people/invite
6 Harry/cover
7 I/not/would/amuse

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15 The passive
Active and passive compared

4 Here is a comparison between **active** and **passive** forms:

PRESENT SIMPLE

ACTIVE The price **includes** meals.
PASSIVE Meals **are included** in the price.

PRESENT CONTINUOUS

ACTIVE Police **are interviewing** a man.
PASSIVE A man **is being interviewed** by police.

PAST SIMPLE

ACTIVE He **caused** the problem.
PASSIVE The problem **was caused** by him.

PAST CONTINUOUS

ACTIVE People **were repairing** the road.
PASSIVE The road **was being repaired.**

PRESENT PERFECT

ACTIVE They **have sold** all the tickets.
PASSIVE All the tickets **have been sold.**

MODAL

ACTIVE You **can buy** this book in most bookshops.
PASSIVE This book **can be bought** in most bookshops.

GOING TO

ACTIVE The manager **is going to choose** the team tomorrow.
PASSIVE The team **is going to be chosen** tomorrow.

5 We often use **by** after a **passive** verb form to say who or what is the subject of the verb. We use **by** before the 'agent' (the person or thing that 'does' the action):

*The programme **is watched by millions of people.***
(= Millions of people watch the programme.)
*Children **must be accompanied by an adult.***
(= An adult must accompany children.)

Grammar in action

3 We use the **active** or the **passive** depending on what is the main topic we are talking about or what we are most interested in. We use the **active** if the subject of the verb is the main topic, and the **passive** if the subject of the sentence is not the subject of the verb because the subject of the verb is not important or not known:

Lions live in parts of Africa and southern Asia. They belong to the cat family. Lions are hunted and killed in some places. They can be seen in many zoos.



Here, the topic is 'lions'. 'Lions' is the subject of 'live' and 'belong', and so those verbs are active. 'Lions' is not the subject of 'hunted', 'killed' or 'seen' – other people hunt, kill and see lions – and so those verbs are passive.

4 We use **by + agent** after a passive verb when it is important to say who 'does' the verb because the sentence would have no real meaning without this information:

The painting 'Sunflowers' was painted by Vincent Van Gogh. It is a very famous painting.

In the example, the main topic is the painting – it is the subject of the next sentence. But the artist's name is important information. We use **by + agent** because the sentence is about both the painting and the artist, and the artist (the agent) is not the subject of the verb.

E College information

Complete the information from a college brochure by changing the active sentences into passive sentences.

0 We offer excellent tuition at the college.
1 You can find details of all our courses on our website.
2 We do not give lessons on public holidays.
3 You must pay all course fees in advance.
4 We are introducing new courses at the college.
5 Students take tests at the end of every course.

Excellent tuition is offered at the college.
..... on our website.
..... on public holidays.
..... in advance.
..... at the college.
..... at the end of every course.

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F Short story competition



This is an announcement on a children's TV programme about a competition. Rewrite the announcement, changing the active forms into passive forms with *by*.

As you know, this programme runs a short story competition every year, and every year, children from all over the country send in stories for the competition. And I know that many of you are creating fantastic stories right now. Last year a story called 'Creeps' won the competition and Ellie Stone, aged 12, wrote that story. The teenage magazine YLP published it and many thousands of people all over the country read it. This year the film director Marvin White is going to judge the competition. And this year, a film studio in London is offering the top prize – Marvin will make the winning story into a short film after the competition. This channel will show that film later in the year.

As you know, a short story competition is run by this programme[0] every year, and every year .....[1] from all over the country for the competition. And I know that .....[2] right now. Last year .....[3] called 'Creeps' and .....[4], aged 12.

.....[5] YLP and .....[6] all over the country. This year, ...[7] Marvin White. And this year, ...[8] in London – .....[9] after the competition. .....[10] later in the year.

G Crime report

Complete this conversation in a police station by putting in the correct active and passive verbs in the box.

will be seen ran will be found will help appeared was grabbed
will throw will be written took has happened contained
was being served will be asked might remember wasn't seen
~~has been stolen~~ am being robbed will be returned

WOMAN Can you help me? My bag has been stolen[0]. Someone .....[1] it while I was in a shop. I .....[2] by an assistant and suddenly it .....[3] by someone. I shouted 'I .....[4]' but it was too late.

OFFICER OK. Can you wait here? In a few minutes you .....[5] by one of my colleagues. You .....[6] to give a description of this person and a report .....[7].

WOMAN I don't know what he looked like and the incident .....[8] by anyone else. The thief simply .....[9] and then he .....[10] away.

OFFICER OK. My colleague .....[11] you and you .....[12] more than you think.

WOMAN I hope so. It's very important. My bag .....[13] my passport but no money. Perhaps the thief .....[14] it away and it .....[15] by somebody.

OFFICER Yes, it's possible that it .....[16] to you by a member of the public. That kind of thing .....[17] before.

WORD FOCUS

Which of these words from exercise G describes a person, which one describes an action and which one describes an event? Write *person*, *action* or *event*.

A incident .....

B grab .....

C thief .....

OVER TO YOU **Now go to page 124.**

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