

PASSIVE OF REPORTING VERBS

◆ Sometimes when you are reporting what people say or believe, you don't know, or you don't want to say, who exactly the 'people' are. So you use an impersonal construction:

People believe that thousands of birds died.

The same idea can be expressed by using the passive in two different ways:

a) **subject + passive of reporting verb + 'to' infinitive**
Hundreds of thousands of birds are believed to have died.

b) **It + passive of reporting verb + that + clause**
It is believed that hundreds of thousands of birds died.

○ Some other reporting verbs that can be used in this way are:

calculate, claim, consider, discover, estimate, expect, feel, hope, know, prove, report, say, show, think, understand, etc.

○ With present reference, the passive is followed by the present infinitive:

*People think that Johnson is in Cardiff.
Johnson is thought to be in Cardiff.*

○ With past reference, the passive is followed by the past infinitive:

*People believe that Johnson left Cardiff last month.
Johnson is believed to have left Cardiff last month.*

○ Present and past continuous infinitives are also used:

*They think that the forger is living in Florence.
The forger is thought to be living in Florence.*

*People know that the suspect has been dealing with drugs.
The suspect is known to have been dealing with drugs.*

○ Passive infinitives can also appear:

*People believe that the portrait was painted by Vermeer.
The portrait is believed to have been painted by Vermeer.*

*They think that the staff are given a bonus whenever they have to work overtime.
The staff are thought to be given a bonus whenever they have to work overtime.*

○ The reporting verb can also be past:

*People considered the government had spent too much.
The government was considered to have paid too much.*

◆ Rewrite each sentence so that the meaning stays the same.

- 1 People think that neither side wanted war.
Neither side is
- 2 People say that fewer than 1,000 blue whales survive in the southern hemisphere.
Fewer
- 3 Everyone knows that eating fruit is good for you.
Eating fruit
- 4 People consider that one in three bathing beaches is unfit for swimming.
One in three bathing beaches
- 5 At least 130,000 dolphins are reported to be caught in the nets of tuna fishers every year.
It is
- 6 It is estimated that in the past 15 years about 10 million dolphins have been killed.
About 10 million dolphins
- 7 In ancient Greece people thought dolphins were men who had abandoned life on land.
In ancient Greece it
- 8 In ancient Rome it was believed that dolphins carried souls to heaven.
In ancient Rome dolphins
- 9 People say that the company invested fifty million pounds last week.
The company
- 10 People say Mr Clark was difficult to work with when he was younger.
Mr Clark
- 11 Someone has calculated that the water of the River Rhine contains over 2,000 chemicals.
It
- 12 Everyone thought the painting had been destroyed in the fire.
The painting
- 13 It is believed that the Chinese invented gunpowder.
The Chinese
- 14 About 1 million papers are thought to have been sold.
People
- 15 It is thought that the two injured men were repairing high-tension cable.
The two
- 16 We hope that the government has prepared a plan.
The government
- 17 People say that Mr Bond was having business difficulties when he was charged with fraud.
Mr Bond
- 18 It is thought that this treasure dates from the 19th century.
This treasure
- 19 People believe that a professional thief stole the painting.
It