Unit 3: Exercise 6

Read the information. Then choose the correct reason for using the passive in each sentence.

We often use the passive (e.g. *something is / was done*):

- to make our language sound more formal
- to show a link between the end of one sentence and the beginning of the next
- to describe impersonal or technical processes
- when the agent (the person or thing that did the action) isn't known
- when the agent isn't important to the story – for example, because we can easily work out who it is
- when we don't want to say who the agent is
- when we want to draw special attention to the agent. We use *by* before the agent and put it at the end of the sentence
- when the agent is a process or event, such as a storm or an accident. We often introduce this type of agent with *in*.

1 *The office **was broken into** at around midnight.*

- ◯ The agent isn't known.
- ◯ To show a link between the end of one sentence and the beginning of the next.

2 *The thief **was arrested** in the early hours of this morning.*

- ◯ The agent is an event, not a person.
- ◯ The agent isn't important (we can work out that the agent was the police).

3 *I'm afraid some incorrect information **was given** at our last press conference.*

- ◯ The speaker is describing a process, so there's no need to mention people.
- ◯ We don't want to say who the agent is.

4 *The police are investigating the theft of a priceless painting. It **was stolen** from an art gallery last night.*

- ◯ To show a link between the end of one sentence and the beginning of the next.
- ◯ The agent isn't important to the story (we can work out that the agent was the burglars).

5 *Thank you for your help. It **is** greatly **appreciated**.*

- ◯ We don't want to say who the agent is.
- ◯ To sound more formal.

6 *The event **was attended** by over three thousand students.*

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- ◯ The agent is an event.
- ◯ To draw special attention to the agent (i.e. the students).

7 *The house **was damaged** in a storm.*

- ◯ The agent was an event, not a person.
- ◯ To sound more formal.

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