

Passive Voice: Present Simple

English has two voices: active and passive. The active voice is used when the subject of the sentence does the action. In the example, A is the subject and B is the object.

For example: My mom sings that song.

The passive voice is used when we focus on the object of the sentence. In the example, B becomes the subject.

For example: That song is sung by my mom.

When it is important to know who does the action, we use by. The noun that follows by is called the "agent." My mom was the subject in the active sentence, but it becomes the agent in the passive sentence.

Sometimes, when the agent is unknown, or unimportant to the meaning of the sentence, we do not use by.

For example: This sweater is made in China.

We form the passive with be + past participle (3rd form of the verb).

In the present simple, the passive is: am / is / are + past participle (3rd form of the verb).

Remember!

1. The past participle always stays the same. Only the form of be changes.
2. The subject and verb must always agree in number.

3.	Subject	Verb	Object
Active	The teachers	help	the new student.
Passive			
Active	The teachers	help	the new students.
Passive			

Negative and Questions

Notice that the helping verb in passive sentences is always a form of the verb be.

	Active	Passive
Affirmative	Ben walks the dog. They make cookies here.	
Negative	Ben doesn't walk the cat. They don't make sandwiches here.	
Question	Does Ben walk the rabbit? How do they make the cookies?	

Remember!

The passive voice is often used:

1. When we talk about art, science, or literature.

For example: The scientific method is used for experiments.

2. To explain directions and instructions.

For example: Baseball is played with nine players on the team.

3. In news reports and academic writing.

For example: The environment is studied by many scientists.

Past Participles (3rd form of the verb)

English verbs have three main forms:

Infinitive	1. Base Form	2. Simple Past	3. Past Participle (3rd form)
to cook	cook	cooked	
to do	do	did	
to eat	eat	ate	

Past participles for regular verbs are also the same as the past tense (add -ed).

Base Form	Simple Past	Past Participle (3rd form)	Passive Sentence
solve	solved	solved	The problem is solved.
carry	carried	carried	The heavy boxes are carried by Moby.

Many past participles for irregular verbs are the same as the past tense.

Base Form	Simple Past	Past Participle (3rd form)	Passive Sentence
make	made	made	The pizza is made by Moby.
cut put	cut put	cut put	The sandwich is cut in two pieces. Apples are put in the bowl.
build	built	built	The houses are built very fast.
buy catch	bought caught	bought caught	The food is bought by my mom. The thieves are caught by the police.

There are many irregular verbs with irregular past participles, and those have to be memorized. It is easiest to remember them in groups that follow the same spelling pattern.

Base Form	Simple Past	Past Participle (3rd form)
Past Participle ends in <i>-en</i>		
bite	bit	
eat	ate	
forget	forgot	
get	got	
give	gave	
ride	rode	
speak	spoke	
take	took	
write	wrote	
Past Participle vowel changes from <i>a</i> to <i>u</i>		
drink	drank	
sing	sang	
swim	swam	
Past Participle changes from <i>ew</i> to <i>own</i>		
blow	blew	
fly	flew	
grow	grew	
know	knew	
throw	threw	
Past Participle changes from <i>ore</i> to <i>orn</i>		
wear	wore	
Past Simple and Past Participles are very different		
do	did	

see	saw	
go	went	

Some verbs cannot be used in the passive because they have no object. Some of these verbs are: happen, come, sleep, arrive, have, go, live, stay, walk, cry.

Parts of Speech

English has eight parts of speech. Every word belongs to one of those eight categories.

Part of Speech	Examples	Sentences
Verbs words that show action or being	run, play, study, sleep, become, go	We go on vacation in August.
Nouns words that name a person, place, thing, or idea	Moby, mother, school, New York, cat, table, history, weather	Moby and Ben go on vacation in August.
Pronouns words that take the place of nouns	I, you, he, she, it, we, they	We go on vacation in August.
Adjectives words that describe or modify nouns or pronouns	red, small, intelligent, dark, careful Adjectives also include the articles: a, an, the	We go on a long and fun vacation in August.
Adverbs words that describe or modify verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs	quickly, carefully, very, almost, sometimes, not, too	We usually go on a long and fun vacation in August.
Prepositions words that show time, place, or position	on, in, at, up, before, behind, under	We go on vacation in August.
Conjunctions words that connect two or more words or groups of words	and, but, or, for	We go on a long and fun vacation in August.
Interjections words that show excitement or emotion	Oh! Yes! Help! Oh no! Wow!	Hooray! It's August! We're going on vacation!

Use the passive voice to rewrite the sentences.

1. We use this room for our guests.

This room

2. They don't feed the lions at the zoo every day.

The lions at the zoo

3. You can open the bottle with this opener.

.....

4. Too many emails stress people.

.....

5. My parents don't give me any pocket money.

.....

6. Poachers kill hundreds of tigers every year.

.....

7. Most African governments protect rhinos.

.....

8. He doesn't expect us to offer him the job.

.....

9. Students at this course do a lot of homework.

.....

10. They don't make these cars in Japan.

.....

Use the words to make sentences in the passive voice.

1. produce | too much waste | in developed countries

.....

2. cars | big cities | block

.....

3. cover | plastic bags and bottles | beaches

.....

4. on roads | find | millions of dead animals | every year

.....

5. pollute | air | factories and vehicle exhausts

.....

6. cut down | in South America and Asia | rain forests

.....

7. fill | water | toxic pollutants

.....

8. see | can | on the climate | the human influence

.....

9. overpopulate | our planet

.....