

The Passive



127 Listen and repeat. Then act out.

Look at all the dust in here! It looks as if this room **hasn't been cleaned** for a month!



The Passive is formed with the appropriate tense of the verb **to be** + **past participle**.

	Active Voice	Passive Voice
Present Simple	He delivers letters.	Letters are delivered .
Past Simple	He delivered the letters.	The letters were delivered .
Present Perfect	He has delivered the letters.	The letters have been delivered .
Past Perfect	He had delivered the letters.	The letters had been delivered .
Present Continuous	He is delivering the letters.	The letters are being delivered .
Past Continuous	He was delivering the letters.	The letters were being delivered .
Future Simple	He will deliver the letters.	The letters will be delivered .
Infinitive	He has to deliver the letters.	The letters have to be delivered .
Modal + be + past part.	He must deliver the letters.	The letters must be delivered .

The Passive is used:

1 when the **agent** (= the person who does the action) is **unknown**, **unimportant** or **obvious** from the context.

My car **was stolen**. (We don't know who stole it.)
This church **was built** in 1815. (unimportant agent)
He **has been arrested**. (obviously by the police)

2 to make more **polite** or **formal** statements.

The car **hasn't been cleaned**. (more polite)
(You haven't cleaned the car. – less polite)

3 when the **action is more important** than the agent, as in processes, instructions, events, reports, headlines, news items, and advertisements.

30 people **were killed** in the earthquake.

4 to put **emphasis on the agent**.

The new library **will be opened** **by the Queen**.

Changing from Active into Passive

- The object of the active verb becomes the subject in the new sentence.

	Subject	Verb	Object	(agent)
Active	Picasso	painted	that picture.	
Passive	That picture	was painted		by Picasso.

- The active verb changes into a passive form and the subject of the active verb becomes the agent. The agent is introduced with **by** or it is omitted.

After modal verbs (**will, can, must, have to, should, may, ought to**) we use **be + past participle**.

You **can** use the machine for cutting bread. \Rightarrow The machine **can be used** for cutting bread.

- We use **by + agent** to say who or what carries out the action. We use **with + instrument / material / ingredient** to say what the agent used.

A cake was made **by** Tina. It was made **with** eggs, flour and sugar.

- We put the agent (= the person who does the action) into the passive sentence only if it adds information. When the agent is unknown, unimportant or obvious it is omitted. Agents such as **people** (in general), **they, somebody**, etc. are omitted.

Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone.

The telephone was invented **by Alexander Graham Bell**. (The agent is not omitted because it adds information.)

Somebody pushed him. He was pushed (**by somebody**). (Unknown agent is omitted.)

The police arrested him. He was arrested (**by the police**). (Obvious agent is omitted.)

1

Fill in: **is, are, was or were**.

- 1 A short story competition **is** organised by our school every year.
- 2 The electric light bulb **invented** by Thomas Edison in 1879.
- 3 Many films **produced** in Hollywood.
- 4 The Lost City of the Incas **located** in Peru.
- 5 The film *Titanic* **directed** by James Cameron.
- 6 The Special Olympics World Games **held** every four years.
- 7 *Guernica* **painted** by Pablo Picasso.
- 8 Toyota cars **made** in Japan.
- 9 Penicillin **discovered** by Alexander Fleming.
- 10 The Harry Potter books **written** by J. K. Rowling.
- 11 The music for the *Phantom of the Opera* **composed** by Andrew Lloyd Webber.
- 12 The Parthenon **visited** by thousands of tourists each year.
- 13 Breakfast **served** from 7:00 am to 11:00 am daily.
- 14 The Coliseum **completed** by the Romans in 80 AD.
- 15 Coffee **grown** in Brazil.

2 How are music videos made? Turn the following sentences into the *present simple passive*.

1 The music producer chooses the song for the music video.

The song for the music video is chosen by the music producer.

2 A director directs the music video.

3 A cameraman shoots the video.

4 A singer or band sings the song.

5 The music company produces the music video.



3 Put the verbs in brackets into the *past simple passive*.

Two men 1) *were seen* (see) breaking into a house last night. The police 2) (call) and one man 3) (catch) immediately. The other escaped but he 4) (find) soon after. Both men 5) (take) to the police station where they 6) (question) separately by a police officer. The two men 7) (charge) with burglary.

4 Amy and many other volunteers are helping their town get ready for the Carnival. Put the verbs in brackets into the *present continuous passive* and the *past continuous passive*.

A It's 10 o'clock on Friday morning and the volunteers are busy.

1 At this time, coloured lights *are being put up* (put up).
 2 Colourful ribbons (tie) around trees.
 3 The music (choose).
 4 The costumes (check).
 5 A stage (build) in the square.

B Later that day, Amy arrived to help with the preparations.

1 When she got there, the streets *were being decorated* (decorate).
 2 Food and drinks (deliver).
 3 Tables and chairs (place) in the square.
 4 Popcorn (make).

