5

GRAMMAR

Passive 1

Basic uses of the passive

- Agent and instrument

  The person who performs an action in a passive sentence is called the 'agent', introduced by *by*. The agent may or may not be mentioned.

  My purse was found ***by one of the cleaners.***

  A new road has been built.

  An object which causes something to happen is called an instrument, introduced by *with*.

  He was hit on the head ***with a hammer.***

- Verbs with two objects

  Verbs which have two objects can be made passive in two ways.

  ***I** was handed **a note**. **A note** was handed **to me**.*

  Other common verbs of this type are *bring, give, lend, pass, pay, promise, sell, send, show, tell*

- Verbs with object and complement

  Some verbs have a noun or adjective which describes their object.

  We elected Jim ***class representative.***

  Everyone considered him ***a failure.***

  When these are made passive, the complement goes directly after the verb.

  Jim was elected ***class representative.***

  He was considered ***a failure.***

- Verbs which cannot be passive

  Most verbs with an object (transitive verbs) can be made passive, e.g. *drive* is transitive because one can drive something (a car).

  However, a few transitive verbs may not be used in the passive. These include *become, fit* (be the right size), *get, have, lack, let, like, resemble, suit.*

  Verbs with no object (intransitive) cannot be passive, e.g. *sleep* is intransitive; you cannot 'sleep something'.

  Therefore it is not possible to say 'The baby was slept'. Instead the sentence must be active: *The baby slept.*

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Using and not mentioning the agent

- Change of focus
  The passive can change the emphasis of a sentence.
  *Jack **won** the prize.* (focus on Jack)
  *The prize **was won** by Jack.* (focus on the prize)

- Unknown agent
  The agent is not mentioned if unknown.
  *Two windows **have been broken**.*
  In this case, there is no point in adding an agent: 'by somebody'.

- Generalized agent
  If the subject is 'people in general' or 'you', the agent is not mentioned.
  *Bicycles **are** widely **used** in the city instead of public transport.*

- Obvious agent
  If the agent is obvious or has already been referred to, it is not mentioned.
  *Linda **has been arrested**!* (we assume by the police)
  *The company agreed to our request and a new car park **was opened**.*

- Unimportant agent
  If the agent is not important to the meaning of the sentence, it is not mentioned.
  *I **was advised** to obtain a visa in advance.*

- Impersonality
  Using the passive is a way of avoiding the naming of a specific person who is responsible for an action.
  *It **has been decided** to reduce all salaries by 10%.*
  In descriptions of processes, there is emphasis on the actions performed rather than on the people who perform them.
  *Then the boxes **are packed** into crates.*

LIVEWORKSHEETS

1 Correct any verb forms which are impossible or inappropriate.

1 A lot of homes in the area have been being broken into by burglars
have been broken into
2 As I drove south, I could see that the old road was rebuilding.
.....
3 I suppose the letter will have been delivered by now. .....
4 There is nothing more annoying than been interrupted when you are speaking.
.....
5 Jim was been given the sack from his new job. .....
6 Somehow without my noticing my wallet had been disappeared.
.....
7 The new shopping centre was opened by the local MP. .....
8 A lot of meetings have been held, but nothing has being decided yet.
.....

2 Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence.

1 The crowd was slowly filling the huge stadium.
The huge stadium .....was slowly being filled..... by the crowd.
2 The inventor of the computer simplified the work of accountants.
Since the computer ..... the work of accountants
..... simplified.
3 Someone has suggested that the shop should close.
It ..... that the shop should close.
4 'I'd take out some travel insurance if I were you, Mr Smith.'
Mr Smith ..... take out some travel insurance.
5 The waitress will bring your drinks in a moment.
Your drinks ..... in a moment.
6 Someone used a knife to open the window.
This window ..... a knife.
7 You will hear from us when we have finished dealing with your complaint.
After your complaint ..... you will hear from us.
8 An announcement of their engagement appeared in the local paper.
Their engagement ..... in the local paper.
9 Nobody ever heard anything of David again.
Nothing ..... David again.
10 They paid Sheila £1,000 as a special bonus.
£1,000 ..... Sheila as a special bonus.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

3 Rewrite each sentence in the passive, omitting the words underlined.

1 Someone left the phone off the hook all night.
The phone was left off the hook all night.

2 The government has announced that petrol prices will rise tomorrow.

3 A burglar broke into our house last week.

4 People asked me the way three times.

5 The fruit-pickers pick the apples early in the morning.

6 It's time the authorities did something about this problem.

7 Lots of people had parked their cars on the pavement.

8 The government agreed with the report and so they changed the law.

9 You have to fill in an application form.

10 They don't know what happened to the ship.

11 Nobody has seen the group's leader since his arrest last month.

4 Complete each sentence with a passive form of the verb in brackets.

1 The boxes (not/pack) have not been packed yet.
2 Your food (still/prepare) .
3 The new ship (launch) next week.
4 Luckily by the time we got there the painting (not/sell) .
5 We had to go on holiday because our house (decorate) .
6 I'm afraid that next week's meeting (cancel) .
7 If we don't hurry, all the tickets (sell) by the time we get there.
8 All main courses (serve) with vegetables or salad. At least that is what is written on the menu.
9 The second goal (score) by Hughes in the 41st minute.
10 The cathedral (build) in the fourteenth century.
11 There's a lot of noise outside because the road (repair) .
12 I was promised that the parcel (deliver) by 10.00, but it still hasn't arrived.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

5 Rewrite each sentence in a more formal style so that it contains a passive form of the word given in CAPITALS.

1 Sorry, but we've lost your letter. MISLAY
unfortunately your letter has been mislaid.

2 The police are grilling Harry down at the station. QUESTION
.....

3 They've found the remains of an old Roman villa nearby. DISCOVER
.....

4 You'll get a rise in salary after six months. RAISE
.....

5 They stopped playing the match after half an hour. ABANDON
.....

6 They stopped traffic from using the centre. BAN
.....

7 They took Chris to court for dangerous driving. PROSECUTE
.....

8 You usually eat this kind of fish with a white sauce. SERVE
.....

9 I don't know your name. INTRODUCE
.....

6 Complete each sentence with a passive form of the verb in brackets.

1 Nothing (see) ..has been seen.. of Pauline since her car (find) ..... abandoned near Newbury last week.

2 As our new furniture (deliver) ..... on Monday morning I'll have to stay at home to check that it (not/damage) ..... during transit.

3 The new Alhambra hatchback, which in this country (sell) ..... under the name 'Challenger', (fit) ..... with electric windows as standard.

4 For the past few days I (work) ..... in Jack's office, as my own office (redecorate) ..... .

5 It (announce) ..... that the proposed new office block (now/not/build) ..... because of the current economic situation.

6 A major new deposit of oil (discover) ..... in the Arctic. It (think) ..... to be nearly twice the size of the largest existing field.

7 *Pictures of the surface of the planet Mars (receive)* ..... yesterday from the space probe 'Rover 3' which (launch) ..... last year.

8 A large sum ..... (raise) for the Fund by a recent charity concert but the target of £250,000 (still/not/reach) ..... .

9 No decision (make) ..... about any future appointment until all suitable candidates (interview) ..... .

LIVEWORKSHEETS

7 Underline any uses of the agent which are unnecessary.

1 My jewellery has been stolen by a thief!
2 It has been decided by the authorities that Wednesday will be a school holiday.
3 Harry was pushed over by someone standing next to him in the queue.
4 The goods are transported by rail to our warehouse in the Midlands.
5 I was told by someone that you have a vacancy for a computer operator.
6 Sue has been picked by the selectors for the national event.
7 The letter was sent by post on the 21st of last month.
8 The larger portrait was painted by a little-known Flemish artist.
9 It has been agreed by everyone that no smoking should be allowed.
10 As I arrived at the conference a note was handed to me by one of the delegates.

8 Complete the text with a suitable active or passive form of the verbs in brackets.

Dear Mrs Patel,

We are delighted to inform you that you (1) have been selected (select) for a free holiday. According to our information, you (2) ..... (answer) a telephone survey last month, as a result of which your name (3) ..... (enter) in the holiday draw. Now our computer (4) ..... (choose) your name, so you and your family (5) ..... (invite) to spend a week in a European destination of your choice. This offer (6) ..... (make) on the condition that you attend a special promotions day with other lucky families in your region who (7) ..... (offer) a similar deal. You (8) ..... (ask) to attend on any Saturday next month at the Royal Hotel, Manchester. If you (9) ..... (interest) in attending and taking up this offer, please (10) ..... (detach) the slip below and return it to us as soon as possible.

9 Complete the texts by writing a passive form of a verb in the box in each space.

announce	assume	call	destroy	discover
display	print	offer	take	write

Text A

It (1) ...has been announced... that fossil remains of one of the largest ever sea creatures (2) ..... on an island in the North Sea. The 150 million year old fossil, a type of pliosaur, (3) ..... 'Big Boy' by scientists, as it is over 15 metres long. The remains (4) ..... to the Natural History Museum in Oslo, where, after conservation work, they (5) ..... in a special section of the museum.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Text B

A bookseller has found a previously unknown poem by the English poet Shelley nearly 200 years after it (6) ..... . The anti-war poem (7) ..... in a pamphlet first published in 1811 in Oxford when the poet was 20. It (8) ..... until the recent discovery that all copies of the poem (9) ....., and experts are predicting great interest when the poem (10) ..... for sale in a book auction at the end of next month.

10 Rewrite each line with a passive verb form.

FROM: The Managing Director TO: All staff

1 We have decided to adopt a flexitime system for a trial period of three months.
It has been decided to adopt a flexitime system for a trial period of three months.

2 The details are here below, and we'll send out a formal document in due course.
.....

3 We'll consult all members of staff through their line manager,
.....

4 and we'll seek feedback.
.....

5 We'll collect and analyse comments
.....

6 before we make a decision
.....

7 as to whether we'll adopt the system permanently or not.
.....

8 It's also possible that we may extend the trial period for a further month.
.....

9 The new system will require all employees to arrive between the hours of 8.00 and 10.00, and to leave after they have fulfilled their contractual obligations of eight hours.
.....

10 We hope that this arrangement meets with your approval.
.....

➔ **SEE ALSO**
Grammar 6: Passive 2
Consolidation 2: Units 5–8

LIVEWORKSHEETS