



# THE PASSIVE



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Expemo code:  
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## Presentation

Compare active and passive structures below.

Active:

*I sent the letter on Monday.*

Passive:

*The letter was sent on Monday.*

In the **active** sentence the **subject** (I) causes an action (sent the letter).

In the **passive** sentence, the cause of the action is unknown or unimportant - we only say what happens to the subject (the letter).

The **passive** is formed with the verb **be** (is/are/was/were etc.) + past participle (e.g. sent)

If we want to say **who** or **what** causes the action in a passive sentence, we use **by**:

- *The letter was sent by her father.*
- *He was hit by a motorbike.*

If the verb in a passive sentence has two objects, we can begin with the second object or use *to*:

- **Active:** *The company gave me a new phone.*
- **Negative:** *I was given a new phone. / A new phone was given to me.*

We sometimes use **get** instead of **be**:

- *He nearly got run over by a car.*
- *My phone got stolen yesterday.*

**Get** is used mainly in informal or spoken English to talk about things that happen or change unexpectedly.

We cannot say, for example, *she gets liked by everyone.*

### Dialogue

A: His car was sold yesterday.

B: Really? Who bought it?

A: I don't know, but he got paid a lot of money for it.

## 2

### Verbs in the passive

Complete the sentences using one of the verbs below in the correct form.

clean      hide      hurt      invite      make      teach      write

1. Bread \_\_\_\_\_ from flour and water.
2. I didn't see you at the party because I \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The office \_\_\_\_\_ by the janitor every morning.
4. Nobody knows when the book \_\_\_\_\_.
5. John \_\_\_\_\_ French at school when he was a child.
6. Did you hear about the accident this morning? Fortunately, only two people \_\_\_\_\_.
7. The burglar didn't find Janet's jewelry box because it \_\_\_\_\_ under her bed.



## 3

## Active or passive?

Part A: Complete the sentences with the verbs in the correct form (active or passive).

## Group 1

1. Tom's parents died when he was a child, so he \_\_\_\_\_ (bring up) by his grandparents.
2. I liked your old Facebook profile picture. Why \_\_\_\_\_ (you/change/it)?
3. My new photos \_\_\_\_\_ (take) when I was on vacation in Spain.
4. I can't get in the house. The door \_\_\_\_\_ (lock)!
5. The shop \_\_\_\_\_ (close) every day at 5pm.
6. My wallet \_\_\_\_\_ (steal) while I was at the bar. I think it was that man with the beard.
7. Somebody \_\_\_\_\_ (steal) my wallet while I was at the bar. I'm never going back there again!
8. Alan \_\_\_\_\_ (drive) everywhere. He loves his new car.

## Group 2

1. The president \_\_\_\_\_ (drive) everywhere. He has his own private chauffeur.
2. Sarah's bike \_\_\_\_\_ (give) to her as a birthday present by her parents.
3. I can't start the car. The keys \_\_\_\_\_ (miss)!
4. My vacation photos \_\_\_\_\_ (take) in the beautiful mountains of Switzerland.
5. The library \_\_\_\_\_ (close) every Saturday at 2pm.
6. My phone \_\_\_\_\_ (steal) while I was on the train. I think it was the person standing next to me.
7. Lucy \_\_\_\_\_ (travel) by bus every day. She enjoys the quiet time.
8. The teacher \_\_\_\_\_ (explain) the new topic clearly, so everyone understands.

**Part B: Rewrite the sentences below in another way, for example:**

It is believed that Paul is in France. → Paul is believed to be in France.

1. It is thought that the suspect was the mastermind behind the crime.

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2. It is believed that the missing boy is wearing a white t-shirt and black trousers.

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3. It was alleged that the accountant had stolen millions from the company.

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4. It is expected that the manager will retire next month.

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5. It is understood that he was relaxing on the beach when the accident happened.

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6. It was known that he was out of the country at the time of the incident.

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7. It is suspected that the prime minister was involved in last year's scandal.

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## 4 Questions with the passive

Write questions using the passive.

Example: When / the television / invent? → *When was the television invented?*

1. When / the first website / build?

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2. When / the telephone / invent?

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3. How often / the Olympics / hold?

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4. When / the first car / make?

---

5. When / America / discover?

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6. Which leader / show / on Indian banknotes?

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Now try to guess the answers to the questions or work with a partner and ask/answer the questions. Compare your answers to the correct answers on the next page. How close were you?



1. The first website was built in 1991.
2. The telephone was invented in 1876.
3. The Olympics are held every 4 years.
4. The first car was made in 1886.
5. America was discovered in 1492.
6. Gandhi is shown on Indian banknotes.

**5****Passive: mixed tenses and modal verbs**

Transform the sentences below into the passive voice. In some sentences, you can use 'get' as well as 'be'.

1. Almost everybody uses a computer these days.

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2. A loud noise woke me up this morning.

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3. Somebody must tell him about the problem immediately!

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4. Nobody can complete this task in only one hour.

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5. Many people have lost their jobs during this economic crisis.

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6. When did somebody write this letter?

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7. Do you think they will discover a cure for cancer one day?

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8. They didn't advertise the job offer on the Internet.

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9. My grandparents built this house over 60 years ago.

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10. Nobody has seen her since last month.

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11. All the hotel staff are treating us really well.

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12. Has somebody found Jack's phone yet?

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