

Active and passive voice

Form and use





A sad story...

- Last week I found a great apartment. The rent was reasonable. That's why...





I decided to throw a party the other night.



The next day I was thrown out of it!





Active or passive

- *I threw a party the other night.* (active)

meaning: I did something.

- *I was thrown out of it.* (passive)

meaning: Something was done to me.



Form

- The passive is formed with the verb *to be* (in the appropriate tense) + *past participle* (of the main verb)

- The terrorist **was arrested** early this morning.
- Toyota cars **are made** in Japan.
- A new class representative **will be chosen** on Monday.

NB These examples show that a passive sentence can be in whatever tense you like. The tense of the verb *to be* changes to give different tenses in the passive.



Let's review the verb *to be*

- The Present Simple Tense – AM, IS, ARE
- The Present Continuous Tense – AM/IS/ARE BEING
- The Present Perfect Tense – HAVE BEEN, HAS BEEN
- The Past Simple Tense – WAS, WERE
- The Past Continuous Tense – WAS/WERE BEING
- The Past Perfect Tense – HAD BEEN
- The Future Tense – WILL BE
- With modals – CAN BE, WOULD BE, SHOULD BE, MAY BE, MUST BE...

Do these sentences have the same meaning?

- What's the difference?



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Use

- The passive is more common in written than spoken English. It sounds formal and impersonal, and for that reason is often used in:
 - reports of crimes or legal procedures – He was sentenced to two years in prison.
 - newspaper reports – The match was postponed due to a heavy fog.
 - scientific writing – Three millilitres of water are added to the mixture.
 - announcements – Flight BA 302 to London is delayed by two hours.
 - notices – Customers are requested not to smoke.



Use

- In everyday situations we use it when we do not know or care who performs the action. In other words, the passive is used when we are more interested in what happens to a thing or a person.
- Nevertheless, it is not unusual to mention the ‘*actual doer*’ in a passive sentence. In that case we put them at the end of the sentence after the preposition *by*:
 - “*Great expectations*” was written *by* Charles Dickens.
 - “*Star wars*” was directed *by* George Lucas.

Practice

- Put the verbs in brackets into the correct passive form
- Shampoo _____ (test) on animals before it _____ (sell) in shops.
- This house _____ (build) in the XIX century.
- Two missing children _____ (find) safe and well.
- A new bridge _____ (construct) next year.



Practice – the key

- Put the verbs in brackets into the correct passive form
- Shampoo **is tested** (test) on animals before it **is sold** (sell) in shops.
- This house **was built** (build) in the XIX century.
- Two missing children **have been found** (find) safe and well.
- A new bridge **will be constructed** (construct) next year.





Active → Passive (steps)



Example:

(active) The postman delivers the letters at 09.00.

Step 1 – identify the object of the active sentence and place it at the beginning of the passive sentence. (**the letters**)

Step 2 – identify the tense of the active verb and put the verb *to be* into the same tense. (**are**)

Step 3 – turn the main active verb into the past participle form. (**delivered**)

(passive) The letters are delivered at 09.00.



Practice - Active → Passive

- The police arrested the suspect late last night.
- _____
- They found him after an intensive search.
- _____
- Two detectives questioned him and charged him with murder.
- _____
- They will take him to court later today.
- _____



Active → Passive (the key)

- The police arrested the suspect late last night.
- The suspect was arrested late last night.
- They found him after an intensive search.
- He was found after an intensive search.
- Two detectives questioned him and charged him with murder.
- He was questioned and charged with murder by two detectives.
- They will take him to court later today.
- He will be taken to court later today.



Summary

- In an active sentence the subject always precedes the action (verb).

S + P + O

- In a passive sentence the object becomes the subject i.e. the one that is acted upon.
- The predicate (verb) consists of the verb *to be* and the past participle of the main verb.
- If necessary, you can use 'by' to say who or what is responsible for the action.
- It is often used when we do not know or care who performs the action.



Thanks for attention!

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