

# Passive Voice

**Let's test our English: Find the passive :** Have a look at the reading text below again, and make a note of all the passive forms that you can find, and make a note of the tense.

In the study, the participants were weighed at the beginning of the dieting period. Of the 500 volunteers, 400 were considered to be overweight and the remaining 100 were within the normal limits for their heights, gender and age. They were then all weighed at periods throughout the six months, and a journal was kept on their eating habits during this time. At the end of the research period, it was found that 70% of all participants had actually increased their weight. Of the 100 people who had not been overweight when they commenced the study, 50% had experienced a gain in weight. This was not a surprising finding for Professor Cluse, who has provided an explanation for the phenomenon in an article published last month in the *North American Medical Journal of Nutrition and Dietetics*.

**Active:** My grandfather planted this tree.

**Passive:** This tree was planted by my grandfather.

| PASSIVE VERB TENSES<br>ACTIVE VOICE | PASSIVE VOICE                              |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Present Simple</b>               | He <b>delivers</b> the letters.            | The letters <b>are delivered</b> .             |
| <b>Past Simple</b>                  | He <b>delivered</b> the letters.           | The letters <b>were delivered</b> .            |
| <b>Future Simple</b>                | He <b>will deliver</b> the letters.        | The letters <b>will be delivered</b> .         |
| <b>Present Continuous</b>           | He <b>is delivering</b> the letters.       | The letters <b>are being delivered</b> .       |
| <b>Past Continuous</b>              | He <b>was delivering</b> the letters.      | The letters <b>were being delivered</b> .      |
| <b>Going to</b>                     | He <b>is going to deliver</b> the letters. | The letters <b>are going to be delivered</b> . |
| <b>Present Perfect</b>              | He <b>has delivered</b> the letters.       | The letters <b>have been delivered</b> .       |
| <b>Past Perfect</b>                 | He <b>had delivered</b> the letters.       | The letters <b>had been delivered</b> .        |
| <b>Infinitive</b>                   | He <b>has to deliver</b> the letters.      | The letters <b>have to be delivered</b> .      |
| <b>Modals</b>                       | He <b>must deliver</b> the letters.        | The letters <b>must be delivered</b> .         |

**Let's practice (01) : Complete the sentences with the correct passive form of the verbs in brackets. Use the Present Simple.**

- English \_\_\_\_\_ (speak) in many countries.
- The post \_\_\_\_\_ (deliver) at about 7 o'clock every morning.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (the building/use) any more?
- How often \_\_\_\_\_ (the Olympic Games/hold)?
- How \_\_\_\_\_ (your name/spell)?
- My salary \_\_\_\_\_ (pay) every month.
- These cars \_\_\_\_\_ (not make) in Japan.
- The name of the people who committed the crime \_\_\_\_\_ (not know).
- His travel expenses \_\_\_\_\_ (not pay) by his company.

**Let's practice (02) : Complete the sentences with the correct passive form of the verbs in brackets. Use the Past Simple.**

- My car \_\_\_\_\_ (repair) last week.
- This song \_\_\_\_\_ (not write) by John Lennon.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (the phone/answer) by a young girl?
- The film \_\_\_\_\_ (make) ten years ago.
- When \_\_\_\_\_ (tennis/invent)?
- The car \_\_\_\_\_ (not damaged) in the accident.
- The original building \_\_\_\_\_ (pull) down in 1965.
- Where \_\_\_\_\_ (this pot/make)?
- When \_\_\_\_\_ (this bridge/build)?

**USE**

The Passive is used:

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

Jane **was shot**.  
(We don't know who shot her.)

This church **was built** in 1815.  
(Unimportant agent)

He **has been arrested**.  
(Obviously by the police)

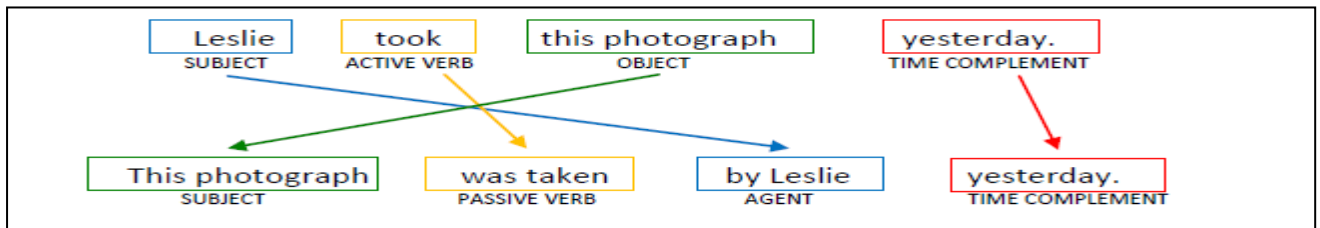
- To make more **polite** or **formal** statements.  
*The car **hasn't been cleaned**.* (more polite)  
*(You haven't cleaned the car. - less polite)*
- When the **action is more important** than the agent, as in processes, instructions, events, reports, headlines, new items, and advertisements.  
*30 people **were killed** in the earthquake.*
- To put **emphasis on the agent**.  
*The new library will be opened **by the Queen**.*

**Let's practice (03) : Choose the correct form of the verbs in brackets.**

**FIAT**

Fiat *was started* (started/was started) by a group of Italian businessmen in 1899. In 1903, Fiat, <sup>1</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ (produced/was produced) 132 cars. Some of these cars <sup>2</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ (exported/were exported) by the company to the United States and Britain. In 1920, Fiat <sup>3</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ (started/was started) making cars at a new factory at Lingotto, near Turin. There was a track on the roof where the cars <sup>4</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ (tested/were tested) by technicians. In 1936, Fiat launched the Fiat 500. This car <sup>5</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ (called/was called) the Topolino - the Italian name for Mickey Mouse. The company grew, and in 1963 Fiat <sup>6</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ (exported/was exported) more than 300,000 vehicles. Today, Fiat is based in Turin, and its cars <sup>7</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ (sold/are sold) all over the world.

**Active to Passive**



*Agatha Christie wrote this book.*

*This book was written by Agatha Christie.*

**Let's practice (04) : Rewrite these sentences in the passive voice**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Someone built this house 200 years ago.<br/>_____</li> <li>A thief stole my purse.<br/>_____</li> <li>The police will arrest the robbers.<br/>_____</li> <li>They produce cars in this factory.<br/>_____</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They serve breakfast at eight o'clock every day.<br/>_____</li> <li>People throw away tones of rubbish every day.<br/>_____</li> <li>They make coffee in Brazil.<br/>_____</li> <li>Someone stole Jim's bike lat night.<br/>_____</li> </ol> |
|---|---|

**Let's practice (05) Rewrite these sentences in the passive voice.**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They will build a new bridge next year.<br/>_____</li> <li>Brian Brody directed <i>The Ultimate Space Adventure</i>.<br/>_____</li> <li>Pierre Matie will design her costume.<br/>_____</li> <li>Someone found my wallet.<br/>_____</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One of the students broke the window.<br/>_____</li> <li>They will deliver my computer on Monday.<br/>_____</li> <li>Mary invited Paul to her birthday party.<br/>_____</li> <li>British astronomers discovered a new planet.<br/>_____</li> </ol> |
|---|---|

**Let's practice (06) : Form the question.**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paper is made from wood.<br/><i>Is paper made from wood ?</i></li> <li>The telephone was invented by Mr Bell.<br/>_____?</li> <li>This picture was painted by Peter.<br/>_____?</li> <li>The thieves will be arrested by the police.<br/>_____?</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The letters will be sent next week.<br/>_____?</li> <li>The animals are fed three times a day.<br/>_____?</li> <li>This article was written by Stanley.<br/>_____?</li> </ol> |
|---|--|

**When use BY OR WITH?**

In the passive voice, we use:

- a. **By** with the **agent** to refer to **by whom** the action is being done.  
*The door was opened **by Mr Black**. (Mr Blak = agent)*
- b. **With** to refer to the instrument, object or material that was used for something to be done.  
*The door was opened **with a key**. (a key = the object that was used)*  
*The omelette was made **with eggs, cheese and peppers**. (eggs, cheese and peppers = the material that was used)*

**Let's practice (07) : rewrite the following sentences in the passive voice using *By* or *With* + agent**

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|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ms Sullivan teaches us grammar.<br/>_____</li> <li>2. The teacher praised him.<br/>_____</li> <li>3. The firemen took the injured to the hospital.<br/>_____</li> <li>4. An earthquake destroyed the town.<br/>_____</li> <li>5. The boy's work pleased the teacher.<br/>_____</li> <li>6. The fire damaged the building.<br/>_____</li> <li>7. Who taught you French?<br/>_____</li> <li>8. The manager will give you a ticket.<br/>_____</li> <li>9. Spectators thronged the streets.<br/>_____</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10. Everyone will blame us.<br/>_____</li> <li>11. The wind blew down the trees.<br/>_____</li> <li>12. The police caught the thieves.<br/>_____</li> <li>13. Alice posted the letter.<br/>_____</li> <li>14. The hostess received us.<br/>_____</li> <li>15. Somebody killed the snake with a stick.<br/>_____</li> <li>16. The people welcomed the minister.<br/>_____</li> <li>17. They found him guilty of murder.<br/>_____</li> <li>18. John Mathews built this house in 1991.<br/>_____</li> </ol> |
|--|--|

**DOUBLE OBJECT VERBS**

- When we have verbs that take two objects like, for example, **give somebody something**, we can convert the active sentence into a passive one in two ways:
  - a. by making the **indirect object** the subject of the passive voice sentence, which is also the way that we usually prefer.
  - b. By making the **direct object** the subject of the passive voice.

*Rick gave me (indirect object) this book (direct object).*  
*I was given this book by Rick.*  
***This book** was given to me by Rick.*

- Some of the verbs that take two objects are: **give, tell, send, show, bring, write, offer, pay**.
- When the indirect object is alone after the verb in the passive voice sentence, it needs the preposition **to**.
- If the indirect object of the active voice sentence is a personal pronoun, it has to be changed into a subject pronoun to be the subject of the passive voice sentence.

| SUBJECT     |   | OBJECT      |
|-------------|---|-------------|
| <b>I</b>    | ↔ | <b>me</b>   |
| <b>You</b>  | ↔ | <b>you</b>  |
| <b>He</b>   | ↔ | <b>him</b>  |
| <b>She</b>  | ↔ | <b>her</b>  |
| <b>It</b>   | ↔ | <b>it</b>   |
| <b>We</b>   | ↔ | <b>us</b>   |
| <b>You</b>  | ↔ | <b>you</b>  |
| <b>They</b> | ↔ | <b>them</b> |

**Let's practice (08) : Rewrite these sentences in the passive voice.**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. They sell oysters in the shop next door.<br/>_____</li> <li>b. They haven't delivered the food yet.<br/>_____</li> <li>c. Shakespeare wrote <i>King Lear</i>.<br/>_____</li> <li>d. They have to answer the questions on this sheet.<br/>_____</li> <li>e. Has anybody put the cases upstairs?<br/>_____</li> <li>f. Someone should take this rubbish away.<br/>_____</li> <li>g. They'll ask you a lot of questions.<br/>_____</li> <li>h. Someone's going to send her some flowers.<br/>_____</li> <li>i. They didn't pay me much for that job.<br/>_____</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>j. Have they offered him a better job?<br/>_____</li> <li>k. They told us a secret.<br/>_____</li> <li>l. Would they lend me their car?<br/>_____</li> <li>m. People should send their complaints to the head office.<br/>_____</li> </ol> |
|--|---|