THE PASSIVE VOICE

INTRODUCTION

The passive of an active tense is formed by putting the verb **to be** into the same tense as the active verb and adding the past participle of the active verb. The subject of the active verb becomes the 'agent' of the passive verb. The agent is very often not mentioned. When it is mentioned it is preceded by **by** and placed at the end of the clause.

Active: My grandfather planted this tree.
Passive: This tree was planted by my grandfather.

PASSIVE VERB TENSES

	ACTIVE VOICE	PASSIVE VOICE
Present Simple	*He **delivers** the letters.*	*The letters **are delivered**.*
Past Simple	*He **delivered** the letters.*	*The letters **were delivered**.*
Future Simple	*He **will deliver** the letters.*	*The letters **will be 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**.*
Going to	*He **is going to deliver** the letters.*	*The letters **are going to be 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**.*
Infinitive	*He **has to deliver** the letters.*	*The letters **have to be delivered**.*
Modals	*He **must deliver** the letters.*	*The letters **must be delivered**.*

		SIMPLE	CONTINUOUS	PERFECT
PRESENT	+	S + am/is/are + Ptp	S + am/is/are + being + Ptp	S + have/has + been + Ptp
	-	S + am/is/are + not + Ptp	S + am/is/are + not +being + Ptp	S + have/has + not + been + Ptp
	?	Am/Is/Are + S + Ptp ?	Am/Is/Are) + S + being + Ptp ?	Have/Has) + S + been + Ptp ?
PAST	+	S + was/were + Ptp	S + was/were + being + Ptp	S + had + been + Ptp
	-	S + was/were + not + Ptp	S + was/were + not + being + Ptp	S + had + not + been + Ptp
	?	Was/Were + S +PtpV ?	Was/Were + S + being + Ptp?	Had + S + been + Ptp
FUTURE	+	S + will + be + Ptp		
	-	S + will + not + be + Ptp		
	?	Will + S + be + Ptp ?		
GOING TO	+	S + V to be (am/is/are) + going to + be + Ptp		
	-	S + V to be (am/is/are) + not + going to + be + Ptp		
	?	V to be (am/is/are) + S + going to + be + Ptp ?		

Short answers

To make short answers:

- we use the verb **to be** (am/is/are/was/were) for *Present Simple, Past Simple, Present Continuous, Past Continuous* and *Going To* questions.
- we use the verb **have** (have/has/had) for *Present Perfect* and *Past Perfect* questions.
- we use **will** for *Future Simple* questions.

USE

The Passive is used:

1. 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)*
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, new 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**.*

AGENT

To say who did the action that we are talking about, ie. to refer to the **agent**, we use the preposition **by** and the name (*by Peter*) , noun (*by the teacher*) or pronoun (*by him*) at the end of the sentence.

We usually only refer to the agent when it gives us some important information which otherwise would be missing from the sentence.

*Our house was designed **by a famous architect.***

We don't mention the agent:

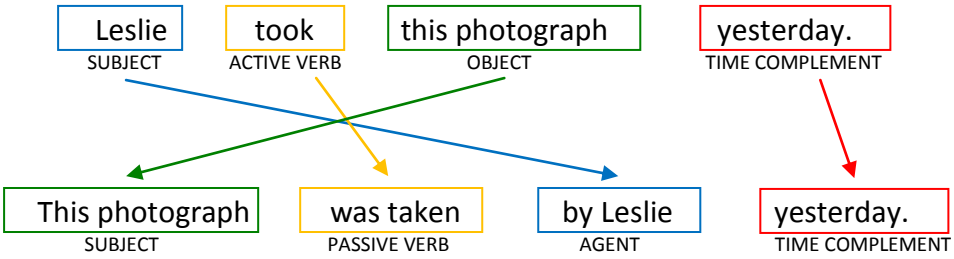
1. if we don't know who has done what we are talking about.
   Our car was stolen last night. (We don't know who stole it)
2. if we are not interested in who has done what we are talking about or it is not important to mention it.
   He has been taken to hospital. (What we are interested in is the fact that he has been taken to hospital and not who has taken him.)
3. if it is easy to understand who did something without it being mentioned.
   The murderer was arrested last night. (It is not necessary to mention that he has been arrested by the police because it is self-evident.)
4. if the subject of the active voice sentence is something like **somebody, people, they, you, etc.**
   ***Someone** broke the window.* → *The window was broken.*

ACTIVE TO PASSIVE

To change a sentence from the active voice to the passive voice:

- the **object** of the active voice sentence becomes the **subject** of the passive voice sentence.
  *Agatha Christie wrote **this book.***
  ***This book** was written by Agatha Christie.*
- we change the main verb of the active voice sentence into the passive voice. The tense remains unchanged.
- the **subject** of the active voice sentence becomes the **agent** of the passive sentence. It is placed after the past participle and it is preceded by the preposition **by.**

Agatha Christie *wrote this book.*
This book was written ***by Agatha Christie****.*



BY OR WITH?

In the passive voice, we use:

- **by** with the **agent** to refer to by whom the action is being done.
  The door was opened ***by Mr Black.*** *(Mr Blak = agent)*
- **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)*

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** (animate) **object** the subject of the passive voice sentence, which is also the way that we usually prefer.
b. By making the **direct** (inanimate) **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**, etc.
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*
I	←→	**me**
You	←→	**you**
He	←→	**him**
She	←→	**her**
It	←→	**it**

SUBJECT		*OBJECT*
We	←→	**us**
You	←→	**you**
They	←→	**them**

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EXERCISES

1. **Complete the sentences with the correct passive form of the verbs in brackets. Use the Present Simple.**
   a. English _____ (speak) in many countries.
   b. The post _____ (deliver) at about 7 o'clock every morning.
   c. _____ (the building/use) any more?
   d. How often _____ (the Olympic Games(hold)?
   e. How _____ (your name/spell)?
   f. My salary _____ (pay) every month.
   g. These cars _____ (not make) in Japan.
   h. The name of the people who committed the crime _____ (not know).
   i. His travel expenses _____ (not pay) by his company.

2. **Complete the sentences with the correct passive form of the verbs in brackets. Use the Past Simple.**
   a. My car _____ (repair) last week.
   b. This song _____ (not write) by John Lennon.
   c. _____ (the phone/answer) by a young girl?
   d. The film _____ (make) ten years ago.
   e. When _____ (tennis/invent)?
   f. The car _____ (not damaged) in the accident.
   g. The original building _____ (pull) down in 1965.
   h. Where _____ (this pot/make)?
   i. When _____ (this bridge/build)?

3. **Choose the correct form of the verbs in brackets.**

FIAT

Fiat [0] *was started* (started/was started) by a group of Italian businessmen in 1899. In 1903, Fiat, [1] _____ (produced/was produced) 132 cars. Some of these cars [2] _____ (exported/were exported) by the company to the United States and Britain. In 1920, Fiat [3] _____ (started/was started) making cars at a new factory at Lingotto, near Turin. There was a track on the roof where the cars [4] _____ (tested/were tested) by technicians. In 1936, Fiat launched the Fiat 500. This car [5] _____ (called/was called) the Topolino – the Italian name for Mickey Mouse. The company grew, and in 1963 Fiat [6] _____ (exported/was exported) more than 300,000 vehicles. Today, Fiat is based in Turin, and its cars [7] _____ (sold/are sold) all over the world.

4. **Change the following sentences into passive sentences using the words in brackets.**
   a. We sell tickets for all shows at the Box Office. (Tickets for all shows/sell/at the Box Office)
   _____
   b. Thomas Edison invented the electric light bulb. (The electric light bulb/invent/by Thomas Edison)
   _____
   c. Someone painted the office last week. (The office/paint/last week)
   _____
   d. Several people saw the accident. (The accident/see/by several people)
   _____
   e. Where do they make these video recorders? (Where/these video recorders/make)
   _____

5. Rewrite these sentences in the passive voice.

a. Someone built this house 200 years ago.

_____

b. A thief stole my purse.

_____

c. The police will arrest the robbers.

_____

d. They produce cars in this factory.

_____

e. They serve breakfast at eight o'clock every day.

_____

f. People throw away tones of rubbish every day.

_____

g. They make coffee in Brazil.

_____

h. Someone stole Jim's bike lat night.

_____

6. Rewrite these sentences in the passive voice.

a. They will build a new bridge next year.

_____

b. Brian Brody directed *The Ultimate Space Adventure*.

_____

c. Pierre Matie will design her costume.

_____

d. Someone found my wallet.

_____

e. One of the students broke the window.

_____

f. They will deliver my computer on Monday.

_____

g. Mary invited Paul to her birthday party.

_____

h. British astronomers discovered a new planet.

_____

7. Form the question.

a. Paper is made from wood. *Is paper made from wood* ?

b. The telephone was invented by Mr Bell. _____ ?

c. This picture was painted by Peter. _____ ?

d. The thieves will be arrested by the police. _____ ?

e. Champagne is made in France. _____ ?

f. The letters will be sent next week. _____ ?

g. The animals are fed three times a day. _____ ?

h. This article was written by Stanley. _____ ?

i. CDs are made of plastic. _____?

j. The party was organised by Paul. _____?

8. Read and complete. Use Past Simple.

a. The toothbrush / invent / in the 15th century.

_____

b. The first public basketball game / play / in 1892.

_____

c. The first eyeglasses / wear / in the 1200s.

_____

d. The first bicycle / ride in 1791.

_____

e. The first hot dog / eat / in the 1860s.

_____

f. The first CDs / sell / in the 1980s.

_____

g. The first electric guitar / play / in 1923.

_____

h. The first computer mouse / use / 1964.

_____

9. Complete with the passive. Use Present Simple.

a. This programme _____ (watch) by millions of people.

b. Paper _____ (make) from wood.

c. Hundreds of people _____ (kill) in accidents every year.

d. London _____ (visit) by thousands of tourists every year.

e. The biology class _____ (teach) by Mr Green.

f. English _____ (speak) all over the world.

g. Lunch _____ (serve) at twelve o'clock.

h. Books _____ (write) by authors.

10. Put the verbs in brackets into Past Simple Passive.

Two men _____ (see) breaking into a house in my street last night. The police _____ (call) and they arrived very quickly. One man _____ (catch) immediately. The other escaped, but he _____ (find) very soon. Both men _____ (take) to the police station where they _____ (question) separately by a police officer. The two men _____ (charge) with burglary.

11. Rewrite the following passage in the Passive.

Somebody has stolen a bus from outside the school. Some children saw the thief. The police are searching for the bus now. They will use the children's descriptions to catch the thief.

_____

_____

_____

12. Rewrite the following passage in the Passive.

Some people saw a UFO in the sky above London last night. They reported it to the police. The army sent a helicopter to look at it more closer. The UFO shot the helicopter down and killed both men in it. People have given photographs of the UFO to the police. Experts are looking at them now.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

13. Rewrite the following passage in the Passive.

Someone broke into a local jewellery shop yesterday. The owner had just locked up the shop when a robber with a gun threatened him. The robber told him to unlock the shop and give him all the diamonds in the safe. Then the robber tied him up. The police have organized a search for the robber. They hope they will find him in a few days. Doctors are treating the owner of the shop for shock.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

14. Rewrite the following passage in the Passive.

My uncle painted this picture. Someone has offered him a lot of money for it. He will deliver the painting tomorrow. When they give him the money, he will tell them the truth. He painted it one night while he was sleepwalking!

_____
_____
_____
_____

15. Rewrite the following passage in the Passive.

Our school is organizing a contest. The teachers will choose the best project about the environment. The students must include pictures and drawings in their projects. The students will also have to do all the writing themselves. The school will give the winner a set of encyclopaedias.

_____
_____
_____
_____

16. Turn from Active to Passive in two ways.

a. He gave me a present. _____
_____
b. The waiter will bring us the bill. _____
_____
c. Her mother bought Mary some sweets. _____
_____
d. Bob has sold Ted a second-hand car. _____

e. Larry is going to send a letter to Tom. _____

_____

17. Turn from Active to Passive.

a. Someone is helping her with the housework.

_____

b. The mail-order company sent Mrs Green a parcel.

_____

c. My friend sent me an invitation.

_____

d. The secretary has given Mrs Jones some letters.

_____

e. The traffic warden had already given him a ticket for illegal parking.

_____

f. John gave Elizabeth that beautiful ring.

_____

g. Her students have sent her flowers.

_____

h. He must give the message to the right person.

_____

i. We teach our students English and French.

_____

j. Someone bought flowers for the bride.

_____

k. They showed the tourists the sights of Athens.

_____

l. They pay her an excellent salary.

_____

m. They paid the artist £1,000 for his painting.

_____

18. Rewrite these sentences in the passive voice.

1. They sell oysters in the shop next door.

_____

2. They haven't delivered the food yet.

_____

3. Shakespeare wrote *King Lear*.

_____

4. They have to answer the questions on this sheet.

_____

5. Has anybody put the cases upstairs?

_____

6. Someone should take this rubbish away.

_____

7. They'll ask you a lot of questions.

_____

8. Someone's going to send her some flowers.

_____

9. They didn't pay me much for that job.

_____

10. Have they offered him a better job?

_____

11. They told us a secret.

_____

12. Would they lend me their car?

_____

13. People should send their complaints to the head office.

_____

14. They had to postpone the meeting because of illness.

_____

15. They are going to hold next year's congress in San Francisco.

_____

16. The bill includes service.

_____

17. People don't use this road very often.

_____

18. They cancelled all the flights because of fog.

_____

19. Somebody accused me of stealing the money.

_____

20. They are building a new ring-road round the city.

_____

21. I didn't realize that someone was recording our conversation.

_____

22. They have changed the date of the meeting.

_____

23. Brian told me that somebody had attacked and robbed him in the street.

_____

24. You should open the wine about three hours before you use it.

_____

25. Somebody had cleaned my shoes and brushed my suit.

_____

26. We use this room only on special occasions.

_____

27. In some districts farmers use pigs to find truffles.

_____

28. John gave Elizabeth that beautiful ring.

_____

29. They have offered Sarah a very good job.

_____

30. The estate agent showed the house to the young people.

_____

31. We will pay the gardener a lot of money.

_____

32. Someone is going to repair the roof next week.

_____

33. They can't find Joanna.

_____

34. They should decorate the room with flowers.

_____

35. Archaeologists have discovered an ancient temple.

_____

36. We will put all these things into boxes.

_____

37. The firefighters rescued the teenagers from the burning building.

_____

38. The youngest student in the class has written the best composition.

_____

39. The children send me messages every day.

_____

40. The villagers gave the travellers food and water.

_____

41. A very talented young girl wrote the story.

_____

42. They are going to finish the new road in a few days.

_____

43. They cancelled the match because of the rain.

_____

44. You must not cross this line.

_____

45. They had picked the oranges before the storm.

_____

46. Professor Smith should write the book.

_____

47. Mr Elliot will pay the workers.

_____

48. Two men were following Tom.

_____

49. Millions of people use the Internet every day.

_____

50. They gave Bob a CD player for his birthday.

_____

51. The prime minister will give a medal to the winners.

_____

52. She is telling the children a story.

_____

53. They've offered Sally a job.

_____

54. Poisonous chemicals have polluted the river.

_____

55. Doctor Simms is examining her.

_____

56. You must stop him now.

_____

57. Someone gave them free tickets for the concert.

_____