

Passive 1 (is done / was done)

A Study this example:



This house **was built** in 1981.

'This house **was built**' is *passive*.

Compare active and passive:

Somebody **built** this house in 1981. (active)
subject *object*

This house **was built** in 1981. (*passive*)
subject

When we use an *active* verb, we say *what the subject does*:

- ☐ My grandfather was a builder. **He built** this house in 1981.
- ☐ It's a big company. **It employs** two hundred people.

When we use a *passive* verb, we say *what happens to the subject*:

- ☐ 'How old is this house?' **'It was built in 1981.'**
- ☐ **Two hundred people are employed** by the company.

B When we use the passive, who or what causes the action is often unknown or unimportant:

- ☐ A lot of money was **stolen** in the robbery. (somebody stole it, but we don't know who)
- ☐ **Is** this room **cleaned** every day? (does somebody clean it? – it's not important who)

If we want to say who does or what causes the action, we use **by**:

- ☐ This house was built **by my grandfather**.
- ☐ Two hundred people are employed **by the company**.

C The passive is **be (is/was etc.) + past participle (done/cleaned/seen etc.)**:

(be) done (be) cleaned (be) damaged (be) built (be) seen etc.

The *past participle* often ends in **-ed** (clean**ed**/damag**ed** etc.), but many important verbs are *irregular* (**built**/**done**/**stolen** etc.). See Appendix 1.

Compare active and passive, *present simple* and *past simple*:

Present simple

active: **clean(s) / see(s)** etc.

Somebody **cleans** this room every day.

passive: **am/is/are + cleaned/seen** etc.

This room **is cleaned** every day.

- ☐ Many accidents **are caused** by careless driving.
- ☐ I'm **not invited** to parties very often.
- ☐ How **is** this word **pronounced**?

Past simple

active: **cleaned/saw** etc.

Somebody **cleaned** this room yesterday.

passive: **was/were + cleaned/seen** etc.

This room **was cleaned** yesterday.

- ☐ We **were woken** up by a loud noise during the night.
- ☐ 'Did you go to the party?' 'No, I **wasn't invited**.'
- ☐ How much money **was stolen** in the robbery?

Exercises

42.1 Complete the sentences. Use these verbs in the correct form, present or past:

cause	damage	find	hold	injure	invite
make	overtake	own	send	show	surround

- Many accidents are caused by careless driving.
- Cheese from milk.
- The roof of the building in a storm a few days ago.
- A cinema is a place where films
- You to the party. Why didn't you go?
- This plant is very rare. It in very few places.
- Although we were driving fast, we by a lot of other cars.
- In the US, elections for president every four years.
- There was an accident last night, but fortunately nobody
- You can't see the house from the road. It by trees.
- I never received the letter. It to the wrong address.
- The company I work for by a much larger company.

42.2 Write questions using the passive. Some are present and some are past.

- Ask about glass. (how / make?) How is glass made?
- Ask about television. (when / invent?) When
- Ask about mountains. (how / form?)
- Ask about DNA. (when / discover?)
- Ask about silver. (what / use for?)

42.3 Put the verb into the correct form, present or past, active or passive.

- a Two hundred people are employed (employ) by the company.
b The company employs (employ) 200 people.
- a Water (cover) most of the earth's surface.
b How much of the earth's surface (cover) by water?
- a While I was on holiday, my camera (steal) from my hotel room.
b While I was on holiday, my camera (disappear) from my hotel room.
- a Robert's parents (die) when he was very young.
b Robert and his sister (bring up) by their grandparents.
- a The boat hit a rock and (sink) quickly.
b Fortunately everybody (rescue).
- a Bill (fire) from his job. He wasn't very good at it.
b Sue (resign) from her job because she didn't enjoy it any more.
- a It can be noisy living here, but it (not / bother) me.
b It can be noisy living here, but I (not / bother) by it.
- a Maria had an accident. She (knock) off her bike.
b Maria had an accident. She (fall) off her bike.
- a I haven't seen these flowers before. What (they / call)?
b I haven't seen these flowers before. What (you / call) them?

42.4 Instead of using somebody, they, people etc., write a passive sentence.

- Somebody cleans the room every day. The room is cleaned every day
- They cancelled all flights because of fog. All
- Somebody accused me of stealing money. money.
- How do you use this word? How used?
- The price includes all taxes. All in the price.
- People warned us not to go out alone. We
- We don't use this office any more. This
- They invited five hundred people to the wedding. Five hundred

Passive 2 (be done / been done / being done)

A

Infinitive

active: (to) **do/clean/see** etc.Somebody **will clean** this room later.passive: (to) **be + done/cleaned/seen** etc.This room **will be cleaned** later.

- ☐ The situation is serious. Something must **be done** before it's too late.
- ☐ A mystery is something that can't **be explained**.
- ☐ The music was very loud and could **be heard** from a long way away.
- ☐ A new supermarket is going **to be built** next year.
- ☐ Please go away. I want **to be left** alone.

B

Perfect infinitive

active: (to) **have + done/cleaned/seen** etc.Somebody **should have cleaned** the room.passive: (to) **have been + done/cleaned/seen** etc.The room **should have been cleaned**.

- ☐ I haven't received the letter yet. It might **have been sent** to the wrong address.
- ☐ If you had locked the car, it wouldn't **have been stolen**.
- ☐ There were some problems at first, but they seem **to have been solved**.

C

Present perfect

active: **have/has + done** etc.The room looks nice. Somebody **has cleaned** it.passive: **have/has been + done** etc.The room looks nice. **It has been cleaned**.

- ☐ Have you heard? The trip **has been cancelled**.
- ☐ **Have** you ever **been bitten** by a dog?
- ☐ 'Are you going to the party?' 'No, I **haven't been invited**.'

Past perfect

active: **had + done** etc.The room looked nice. Somebody **had cleaned** it.passive: **had been + done** etc.The room looked nice. **It had been cleaned**.

- ☐ The vegetables didn't taste good. They **had been cooked** too long.
- ☐ The car was three years old, but **hadn't been used** very much.

D

Present continuous

active: **am/is/are + (do)ing**Somebody **is cleaning** the room at the moment.passive: **am/is/are + being (done)**The room **is being cleaned** at the moment.

- ☐ There's somebody walking behind us. I think we **are being followed**.
- ☐ A new bridge **is being built** across the river. It will be finished next year.

Past continuous

active: **was/were + (do)ing**Somebody **was cleaning** the room when I arrived.passive: **was/were + being (done)**The room **was being cleaned** when I arrived.

- ☐ There was somebody walking behind us. I think we **were being followed**.

Exercises

43.1 Complete these sentences. Use the following verbs in the passive:

arrest carry cause delay ~~do~~ forget keep knock know make repair ~~send~~

Sometimes you need **have** (might have, would have etc.).

- The situation is serious. Something must be done before it's too late.
- I haven't received the letter yet. It might have been sent to the wrong address.
- A decision will not until the next meeting.
- These documents are important. They should always in a safe place.
- This road is in bad condition. It should a long time ago.
- The injured man couldn't walk and had to
- If you hadn't shouted at the policeman, you wouldn't
- I'm not sure what time I'll arrive tomorrow. I may
- It's not certain how the fire started. It might by an electrical fault.
- A new school is being built. The old one is going to down.
- The election is next Sunday. The full results will on Tuesday.
- Last week they weren't speaking to one another. Now they're happy again. The problem seems to

43.2 Make sentences from the words in brackets. Sometimes the verb is active, sometimes passive.

- There's somebody behind us. (We / follow) We're being followed.
- This door is a different colour, isn't it? (you / paint?) Have you painted it?
- My bike has disappeared. (It / steal!) It
- My umbrella has disappeared. (Somebody / take) Somebody
- A neighbour of mine disappeared six months ago.
(He / not / see / since then) He
- I wonder how Jessica is these days.
(I / not / see / for ages) I
- A friend of mine was stung by a bee recently.
(you / ever / sting / bee?) you
- The bridge was damaged recently.
(It / repair / at the moment) It
- Tom's car was stolen recently.
(It / not / find / yet)
- I went into the room and saw that the table and chairs were not in the same place.
(The furniture / move) The

43.3 Instead of using 'somebody', 'they' etc., write a passive sentence.

- Somebody has cleaned the room. The room has been cleaned.
- They are building a new road around the city.
A around the city.
- They have built two new hotels near the airport.
Two near the airport.
- When I last visited, they were building some new houses here.
When I last visited, some
- The meeting is now on 15 April. They have changed the date.
The date of
- I didn't know that somebody was recording our conversation.
I didn't know that our
- Is anyone doing anything about the problem?
..... anything the problem?
- The windows were very dirty. Nobody had cleaned them for ages.
The windows were very dirty. They

A I was offered .../ we were given ... etc.

Some verbs can have two objects. For example, **give**:

- My grandfather gave me this watch.
object 1 object 2

It is possible to make two passive sentences:

- ☐ I **was given** this watch (by my grandfather). or
This watch **was given** to me (by my grandfather).

Other verbs which can have two objects are:

ask offer pay show tell

When we use these verbs in the passive, most often we begin with the *person*:

- ☐ **I've been offered** the job, but I don't think I want it. (= somebody has offered me the job)
- ☐ **You will be given** plenty of time to decide. (= we will give you plenty of time)
- ☐ I didn't see the original document, but **I was shown** a copy. (= somebody showed me a copy)
- ☐ Tim has an easy job – **he's paid a lot of money** to do very little. (= somebody pays him a lot)



B I don't like being ...

The passive of **doing/seeing** etc. is **being done / being seen** etc. Compare:

active: I don't like **people telling me** what to do.

passive: I don't like **being told** what to do.

- ☐ I remember **being taken** to the zoo when I was a child.
(= I remember **somebody taking** me to the zoo)
- ☐ Steve hates **being kept** waiting. (= he hates **people keeping** him waiting)
- ☐ We climbed over the wall without **being seen**. (= without **anybody seeing** us)

I was born ...

We say '**I was** born ...' (*not* I am born):

- ☐ I was born in Chicago.
- ☐ Where **were** you **born**? (*not* Where are you born?) } *past*

but

- How many babies **are born** every day? *present*

D get

You can use **get** for the passive:

- ☐ There was a fight, but nobody **got hurt**. (= nobody **was** hurt)
- ☐ I don't **get invited** to many parties. (= I'm not invited)
- ☐ I'm surprised Liz **didn't get offered** the job. (= Liz **wasn't offered** the job)

We use **get** only when things *happen*. For example, you cannot use **get** in these sentences:

- Jessica **is liked** by everybody. (*not* gets liked – this is not a ‘happening’)
- Peter was a mystery man. Very little **was known** about him. (*not* got known)

We use **get** mainly in informal spoken English. You can use **be** in all situations.

We also use **get** in the following expressions (which are not passive in meaning):

get married, get divorced

get lost (= not know where you are)

get dressed (= put on your clothes)

get changed (= change your clothes)

Exercises

44.1 Complete the sentences using the correct form of the verb.

- I tried to contact Tom.
I called his office but I was told (tell) that he was in a meeting.
- Amy retired from her job recently.
She (give) a present by her colleagues.
- I didn't know there was a meeting yesterday.
I (not / tell) about it.
- Sarah's salary is very low.
I don't understand why she (pay) so little.
- You will need to use this machine.
Have you (show) how it works?
- I had an interview for a job recently. It wasn't easy.
I (ask) some questions that were very hard for me to answer.
- They didn't tell us much about the project.
We (not / give) enough information.
- I was surprised to get the job I applied for.
I didn't expect (offer) it.

44.2 Complete the sentences using **being + the following verbs (in the correct form):**

bite give invite ~~keep~~ knock down stick treat

- Steve hates being kept waiting.
- We went to the wedding without
- I like giving presents and I also like them.
- It's a busy road and I don't like crossing it. I'm afraid of
- How do you avoid by mosquitoes?
- I'm an adult. I don't like like a child.
- You can't do anything about in a traffic jam.

44.3 Complete the sentences using **get or **got** + the following verbs (in the correct form):**

ask break ~~hurt~~ pay steal sting stop use

- There was a fight, but nobody got hurt.
- Alex by a bee while he was sitting in the garden.
- These tennis courts don't very often. Not many people want to play here.
- I used to have a bike, but it a few months ago.
- Rachel works hard, but she doesn't very much.
- Please pack these things very carefully. I don't want anything to
- People often want to know what my job is. I that question a lot.
- Last night I by the police as I was driving home. One of the lights on my car wasn't working.

44.4 Complete the sentences.

- I've been offered the job, but I don't think I'll accept it.
- I don't get invited to many parties.
- Which year you born in?
- I haven't been any information yet.
- I didn't know the way, so I got
- He doesn't like interrupted when he's speaking.
- How did the window broken? What happened?
- She's a voluntary worker. She get paid.
- I born in a small town in the north of the country.
- We had to do what we did. We given any choice.