

Passive

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Grammar Notes

THE PASSIVE VOICE

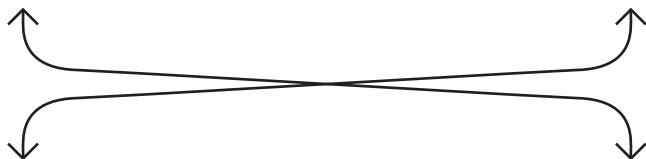
A. Introduction

In an active sentence, the subject is the **doer** of the verb (= *does* the action) and the object is the **recipient** of the verb (= *receives* the action). In a passive sentence, the subject and object switch places. The **recipient** of the action is now the main focus of the sentence. This is called the passive voice.

ACTIVE



PASSIVE



B. Use

We use the passive voice when we want the focus to be on the **recipient** of the action. We often use the passive voice when we don't know who did the action or when the doer isn't important. In fact, the doer is often dropped from the sentence!

- The pizza was eaten by the students.
- The pizza was eaten.

Grammar Notes cont.

C. Form: Positive Sentences

Pattern

be / get + p.p.

The passive is formed with the Be verb and the past participle of the main verb. The doer of the verb is usually dropped from the sentence. To include it, we use the phrase *by + person*.

In informal speaking and writing, we can use *get* instead of *be*.

Formal or Informal

The pizza was eaten (by the students).

Informal

The pizza got eaten (by the students).

D. Form: Negative Sentences

We use **be + not + p.p.** to form a negative passive sentence.

For the informal passive, we use **do + not + get + p.p.**

- The pizza wasn't eaten (by the students).
- The pizza didn't get eaten (by the students).

E. Form: Questions

We use **be + subject + p.p.** to form a passive question.

For the informal passive, we use **do + subject + get + p.p.**

- Was the pizza eaten (by the students)?
- Did the pizza get eaten (by the students)?

Grammar Notes cont.

F. Form: Verb Tenses

Most verb tenses can be used with the passive voice.
See the chart below for examples of different tenses.

Verb Tense	Active	Passive
simple present	The chef prepares the meal.	The meal is prepared (by the chef.)
present progressive	The chef is preparing the meal.	The meal is being prepared.
simple past	The chef prepared the meal.	The meal was prepared.
past progressive	The chef was preparing the meal.	The meal was being prepared.
simple future	The chef will prepare the meal. The chef is going to prepare the meal.	The meal will be prepared. The meal is going to be prepared.
future progressive	The chef will be preparing the meal.	—
present perfect	The chef has prepared the meal.	The meal has been prepared.
present perfect progressive	The chef has been preparing the meal.	—
past perfect	The chef had prepared the meal.	The meal had been prepared.
past perfect progressive	The chef had been preparing the meal.	—
future perfect	The chef will have prepared the meal.	The meal will have been prepared.
future perfect progressive	The chef will have been preparing the meal.	—
modals (can, should, must, etc.)	The chef must prepare the meal.	The meal must be prepared.
past modals (could, should, had to, etc.)	The chef should have prepared the meal.	The meal should have been prepared.

Exercise 1

ACTIVE OR PASSIVE?

Are these sentences in the active or passive voice?
Put an **x** in the correct column.

#	Sentence	Active	Passive
Ex	Many different languages are spoken in Canada.		x
1	All the food at the party was eaten.		
2	I fed the cat last night.		
3	The mail is delivered every day.		
4	The mailman delivers our mail in the morning.		
5	The meeting will be held in the conference room.		
6	The mechanic has already fixed my car.		
7	John's car is being fixed right now.		
8	Twenty people were invited to the party.		
9	They will make a decision at the meeting.		
10	The wind blew down the trees.		

Exercise 2

HISTORIC EVENTS

Using the simple past tense, form an active and passive sentence with the words below.

Ex. Leonardo da Vinci / paint / the Mona Lisa

Leonardo da Vinci painted the Mona Lisa.

The Mona Lisa was painted by Leonardo da Vinci.

1. Lee Harvey Oswald / kill / President Kennedy / 1963

2. Alexander Graham Bell / invent / the telephone

3. John Lennon / write / the song "Imagine"

4. a hurricane / destroy / many homes / in Florida

5. ancient Romans / speak / Latin

6. the Allies / defeat / the Germans / in 1945

Exercise 3

COMPLETE THE SENTENCES

Using the passive voice, complete the following sentences with the correct tense of the verb provided.

Ex. Dinner _____ *is being served* _____ now.
(serve)

1. My car is at the service station. It _____ right now.
(repair)

2. Dinner _____ at 7:00 last night.
(serve)

3. Your check _____ already _____ in the bank.
(deposit)

4. The newspaper _____ before 6:00 am every day.
(deliver)

5. The book _____ in 1950.
(publish)

6. The patient _____ by a surgeon tomorrow.
(examine)

7. The question _____ at our next meeting.
(discuss)

8. Twenty new workers _____ last month.
(hire)

9. These library books _____ already _____ .
(return)

10. Hundreds of people _____ in the train accident last week.
(injure)

Exercise 4

ACTIVE TO PASSIVE

Change the following sentences from active to passive.

Ex. modal (must) They must complete the project before 5:00 pm.

The project must be completed before 5:00 pm.

1. simple present People speak English in Australia.

2. present progressive I am writing the report now.

3. simple past The dog bit the mailman.

4. past progressive He was still fixing the car when I arrived at the garage.

5. future (will) Someone will give us a tour of the museum.

6. future (be going to) They are going to tear down the old building.

7. present perfect She has already given him the bad news.

8. past perfect We had built the houses before the tsunami hit.

9. modal (can) They can deliver the furniture on Tuesday.

10. past modal (should) You should have finished your homework hours ago.

Exercise 5

PASSIVE TO ACTIVE

Change the following sentences from passive to active.

Ex. French is spoken in Quebec.

People speak French in Quebec.

1. Fifty kids are picked up for school by this bus every day.

2. The floors were being washed by the cleaners when the power went out.

3. The broken window can be fixed by the repairman tomorrow.

4. The tax is already included in this bill.

5. This office should have been cleaned by someone.

6. His dogs are being fed right now.

7. Oranges are grown in California.

8. My house will have been painted by the painters by the time you visit.

9. Your seat belt must be worn at all times.

10. The problem had been fixed by the CEO by the end of the day.

Exercise 6

NEGATIVE SENTENCES

Using the words provided, write sentences in the negative form of the passive.

Ex. They will send the package by regular mail. (*not / send / express*)

The package won't be sent by express mail.

1. The police are going to release the boy. (*not / put / in jail*)

2. I cooked the potatoes in the oven. (*not / cook / in the microwave*)

3. The company president delivered the news in person. (*not / send / by email*)

4. She makes the cake with oil. (*not / make / with butter*)

5. The police gave him a warning. (*not / give / a speeding ticket*)

6. You should wash the sweater in cold water. (*not / put / in the dryer*)

7. He started the fire by accident. (*not / start / on purpose*)

8. They will sign the contract next month. (*not / sign / tomorrow*)

9. I always take my pills with a meal. (*not / take / on an empty stomach*)

10. You should buy your vegetables at the farmer's market. (*not / buy / the grocery store*)

Exercise 7

QUESTIONS

Ask questions using the information provided and the passive voice.

Ex. There was a bad car accident yesterday. (*how many / people / injure*)

How many people were injured?

1. Many new employees are starting work today. (*how many / new people / hire*)

2. Mr. Brooks is going to fire his secretary. (*why / she / fire*)

3. You shouldn't wash that jacket. (*how / it / clean*)

4. My favorite TV program was canceled last night. (*what / program / show / instead*)

5. The police found the stolen car. (*where / it / find*)

6. They will deliver the package tomorrow. (*what time / it / deliver*)

7. They are going to hold this meeting in Room 21. (*where / next meeting / hold*)

8. The company has sold 100 cars this month. (*how many / cars / sell / so far this year*)

9. The war lasted five years. (*how many / people / kill*)

10. Someone took my wallet. (*how much / money / take*)

Exercise 8 (Student A)

PAIR WORK

A. Services

Imagine you are getting your car serviced. Now imagine your partner is calling you on the phone. Give him or her an update on the services you requested using the present perfect passive. Then fill in your partner's information.

Example

Student A: Hello?

Student B: Hi, it's me! What are you doing?

Student A: I'm getting my car serviced.

Student B: That's good. What's been done so far?

Student A: Well, the oil has been changed, but the tires haven't been rotated yet.

Student B: Okay. What else has been done?

(cont.)

Me		My Partner	
✓	oil / change		weight / record
✗	tires / rotate		blood pressure / check
✗	brake pads / inspect		heart rate / monitor
✓	spark plugs / clean		breathing / checked
✓	tire pressure / check		shots / give
✗	windshield wiper fluid / add		blood / draw
✓	broken headlight / replace		teeth / look at
✗	entire car / clean		nails / trim

Exercise 8 (Student B)

PAIR WORK

A. Services

Imagine you are at the vet with your dog. Now imagine your partner is calling you on the phone. Give him or her an update on the services you requested using the present perfect passive. Then fill in your partner's information.

Example

Student B: Hello?

Student A: Hi, it's me! What are you doing?

Student B: I'm at the vet. My dog Lily is sick.

Student A: Oh no! Has she been seen by the vet yet?

Student B: Yeah. Her weight has been recorded and her blood pressure has been checked, but her heart rate hasn't been monitored yet.

Student A: Okay. What else has been done?

(cont.)

Me		My Partner	
✓	weight / record		oil / change
✓	blood pressure / check		tires / rotate
✗	heart rate / monitor		brake pads / inspect
✗	breathing / checked		spark plugs / clean
✓	shots / give		tire pressure / check
✓	blood / draw		windshield wiper fluid / add
✗	teeth / look at		broken headlight / replace
✗	nails / trim		entire car / clean

Exercise 8 cont.

PAIR WORK

B. Event Planning

Now imagine that you and your partner are managers whose assistants have been planning a big corporate event. What questions will you ask your assistants to check on their progress? Work together to write five questions using the present perfect passive.

Ex. Have the brochures been ordered?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Exercise 9

FIND SOMEONE WHO

Walk around the classroom and ask your classmates questions. Write your classmate's name on the right if he/she answers "yes." Follow up with another question to keep the conversation going!

Example

A: Have you ever been injured in a car accident?

B: Yes, I have.

A: Oh no. What happened?

B: I got rear-ended at a stoplight,
and my neck and back were injured.

#	Find someone...	Name
1	who has been injured in a car accident.	
2	who has been bitten by a dog.	
3	who was born in April.	
4	who knows what language is spoken in Brazil.	
5	who was given a gift last month.	
6	whose wallet has been stolen.	
7	who has been taken to a hospital in an ambulance.	
8	who knows where the next winter Olympics will be held.	
9	who has never been stung by a bee.	
10	who can name three famous world leaders who were assassinated in the past 100 years.	

Exercise 10

WRITING

The passive voice is often used when reporting a news story. Write a short news article (based on real or made-up events) that contains at least five sentences in the passive voice. Try to use more than one verb tense.

Example

Last night, there was an accident on Main Street at 10:00 pm. A storefront was damaged when it was hit by a van. The store's main window was smashed in from the impact. The accident was witnessed by three clerks who were working the late shift. No comments have been made by local police yet.

Exercise 11

LISTENING

Listen to the recording. Do the sentences contain an active verb, a passive verb, or both? Put a check mark (✓) in the correct box.

#	Active	Passive	Both
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			

Exercise 12

QUIZ

Circle the correct answer.

1. The hiker has never _____ by a snake.
 - a) bitten
 - b) been bitten
 - c) bit
2. Portuguese _____ in Brazil.
 - a) is spoken
 - b) could be spoke
 - c) speaks
3. _____ you eat all your vegetables?
 - a) Were
 - b) Did
 - c) Have
4. No one _____ in the accident.
 - a) wasn't hurt
 - b) didn't hurt
 - c) was hurt
5. The little boy loves _____ .
 - a) tickled
 - b) tickle
 - c) to be tickled
6. Have you ever _____ a bone?
 - a) broken
 - b) been broken
 - c) being broken
7. Dinner _____ at 7:00 every night.
 - a) has being served
 - b) is served
 - c) serves
8. The tennis match _____ because of the storm.
 - a) had to be postponed
 - b) postponed
 - c) is postponing
9. The rain _____ the decorations.
 - a) was ruined
 - b) were ruined
 - c) ruined
10. The prize _____ to the fastest runner in tomorrow's race.
 - a) will given
 - b) will be given
 - c) was given

Answer Key

LESSON DESCRIPTION:

In this lesson, students practice using the passive voice with a variety of tenses and modals. Tasks where students have to distinguish between the active and passive voice are included.

LEVEL: Int – High Int

TIME: 2–3 hours

TAGS: passive, be, get, active, verbs, tenses, voice, formal, informal, grammar

Exercise 1

- | | |
|------------|------------|
| 1. passive | 6. active |
| 2. active | 7. passive |
| 3. passive | 8. passive |
| 4. active | 9. active |
| 5. passive | 10. active |

Exercise 2

- Lee Harvey Oswald killed President Kennedy in 1963.
President Kennedy was killed by Lee Harvey Oswald in 1963.
- Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone.
The telephone was invented by Alexander Graham Bell.
- John Lennon wrote the song “Imagine.”
The song “Imagine” was written by John Lennon.
- A hurricane destroyed many homes in Florida.
Many homes were destroyed by a hurricane in Florida.
- Ancient Romans spoke Latin.
Latin was spoken by ancient Romans.
- The Allies defeated the Germans in 1945.
The Germans were defeated by the Allies in 1945.

Exercise 3

Answers may vary.

- is being repaired
- was served
- has (already) been deposited
- is delivered
- was published

- will be examined / is going to be examined
- will be discussed / is going to be discussed
- were hired
- have (already) been returned
- were injured

Exercise 4

Answers may vary.

- English is spoken in Australia.
- The report is being written now.
- The mailman was bitten by the dog.
- The car was still being fixed when I arrived at the garage.
- A tour of the museum will be given.
- The old building is going to be torn down.
- The bad news has already been given to him.
- The houses had been built before the tsunami hit.
- The furniture can be delivered on Tuesday.
- Your homework should have been finished hours ago.

(continued on the next page...)

Answer Key cont.

Exercise 5

Answers may vary.

1. This bus picks up 50 kids for school every day.
2. The cleaners were washing the floors when the power went out.
3. The repairman can fix the broken window tomorrow.
4. This bill already includes the tax.
5. Someone should have cleaned this office.
6. He is feeding his dogs right now.
7. People grow oranges in California.
8. The painters will have painted my house by the time you visit.
9. You must wear your seat belt at all times.
10. The CEO had fixed the problem by the end of the day.

Exercise 6

Answers may vary.

1. He isn't going to be put in jail.
2. The potatoes weren't cooked in the microwave.
3. The news wasn't sent by email.
4. The cake isn't made with butter.
5. A speeding ticket wasn't given.
6. The sweater shouldn't be put in the dryer.
7. The fire wasn't started on purpose.
8. The contract won't be signed tomorrow.
9. My pills aren't taken on an empty stomach.
10. Your vegetables shouldn't be bought at the grocery store.

Exercise 7

Answers may vary.

1. How many new people are being hired/were hired?
2. Why is she going to be fired/is she being fired?
3. How should it be cleaned?
4. What program will be shown/is being shown/was shown instead?
5. Where was it found?

6. What time will it be delivered?
7. Where is the next meeting going to be held?
8. How many cars have been sold so far this year?
9. How many people were killed?
10. How much money was taken?

Exercise 8

A. SERVICES

Monitor your students for correct use of the passive.

Student A

- ✓ oil / change
- ✗ tires / rotate
- ✗ brake pads / inspect
- ✓ spark plugs / clean
- ✓ tire pressure / check
- ✗ windshield wiper fluid / add
- ✓ broken headlight / replace
- ✗ entire car / clean

Student B

- ✓ weight / record
- ✓ blood pressure / check
- ✗ heart rate / monitor
- ✗ breathing / checked
- ✓ shots / give
- ✓ blood / draw
- ✗ teeth / look at
- ✗ nails / trim

B. EVENT PLANNING

Answers will vary.

Monitor your students for correct use of the passive.

Exercise 9

Answers will vary.

Monitor your students for correct use of the passive.

Exercise 10

Answers will vary.

Monitor your students for correct use of the passive.

(continued on the next page...)

Answer Key cont.

Exercise 11

Play the recording a second time if you feel your students need it.

Transcript:

1. Three people were injured in the accident yesterday.
2. The company will contact me next week.
3. My house got broken into last week, but the police caught the thief yesterday.
4. English is spoken all over the world nowadays.
5. Yesterday she heard that her university application had been accepted.
6. You need to water your plants twice a week.
7. They were thrilled with their test results.
8. He didn't go to the party because he wasn't invited.
9. We took a bus to the game yesterday because our car was getting fixed.
10. This jar of jam can be kept at room temperature until it is opened. After that, it must be refrigerated.

Answers:

- | | |
|------------|-------------|
| 1. passive | 6. active |
| 2. active | 7. passive |
| 3. both | 8. both |
| 4. passive | 9. both |
| 5. both | 10. passive |

Exercise 12

- | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. b | 3. b | 5. c | 7. b | 9. c |
| 2. a | 4. c | 6. a | 8. a | 10. b |

SPELLING NOTE:

This lesson shows the American spelling of the words *Check*, *Favorite*, *Canceled*, and *Practice*. Most other English-speaking countries spell these words this way: *Cheque*, *Favourite*, *Cancelled*, and *Practise* (when used as a verb; *Practice* when used as a noun). Make it a challenge for your students to find these words in the lesson and see if they know the alternate spellings.