

# PASSIVES

Passives are used whenever an action is more important – for example, in reporting the news or scientific experiments:

- A woman has been arrested for the abduction of baby Jane Smith.
- The sample was analyzed for traces of lead poisoning.

The object of the active verb becomes the subject of the passive sentence, and the verb **be** is used in the correct tense with the past participle of the relevant verb.

By + the agent is used only if it contributes important information:

- Coastal buildings have been damaged by gales.

**Intransitive verbs**, e.g. **arrive**, cannot become passive, because they have no object. Certain other verbs, e.g. **let**, **fit**, **lack**, **resemble**, **suit**, cannot normally become passive.

After modal verbs, **passive infinitives** are used:

- He should be arrested.
- They might have been killed.

**Passive –ing forms** are possible:

- The children like being driven to school.
- Having been fed, the cat went back to sleep.

Many verbs, like **give**, **award**, **lend**, can have two objects. When putting these verbs into the passive, it is more usual to make 'the person object', rather than the 'thing object', the subject of the passive verb:

- I was given back my change. (NOT: My change was given back to me), though it is grammatical.

Passive constructions are often used with verbs like **say**, **believe**, and **know**.

**It + passive + to + that clause:**

- It is said that these people died in the accident
- It was once believed that the earth was completely flat.

**Subject + passive + to + infinitive:**

- Three people are said to have died in the accident.
- The earth was once believed to be completely flat.

Sometimes there are two passive constructions in the same sentence:

- It is known that York was invaded by the Vikings.
- York is known to have been invaded by the Vikings.

Other verbs which are used in this way include: **consider**, **think**, **understand**, **report**, **allege**, **expect**, **fear**, **claim** and **deny**. The verb '**be rumoured**' only exists in the passive form.