

# WORKSHEET on GRAMMAR

## Topic: Use of Passive

The passive voice is used when we want to emphasize the action (the verb) and the object of a sentence rather than subject. This means that the subject is either less important than the action itself or that we don't know who or what the subject is.

Example: My bike was stolen.

In the example above, the focus is on the fact that my bike was stolen. I do not know, however, who did it.

Sometimes a statement in passive is more polite than active voice, as the following example shows:

Example: A mistake was made.

In this case, I focus on the fact that a mistake was made, but I do not blame anyone (e.g. You have made a mistake.).

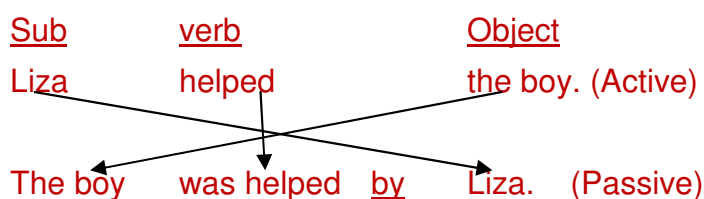
## Form of Passive

Subject + finite form of *to be* + Past Participle (3rd column of irregular verbs)

Example: A letter was written.

When rewriting active sentences in passive voice, note the following:

- The object of the active sentence becomes the subject of the passive sentence.
- The subject of active sentence becomes the object of passive sentence, mostly preceded by a preposition 'by' (sometimes 'to') or is dropped.
- The verb of the active sentence is changed to passive form i.e. 'Be' verb form of the same tense+ Past participle (v3) form of the verb



## Examples of Passive

Tense		Subject	Verb	Object
Simple Present	Active:	Rita	writes	a letter.
	Passive:	A letter	is written	by Rita.

Simple Past	Active:	Rita	wrote	a letter.
	Passive:	A letter	was written	by Rita.
Present Perfect	Active:	Rita	has written	a letter.
	Passive:	A letter	has been written	by Rita.
Future I	Active:	Rita	will write	a letter.
	Passive:	A letter	will be written	by Rita.
Modals	Active:	Rita	can write	a letter.
	Passive:	A letter	can be written	by Rita.

## Examples of Passive

Tense		Subject	Verb	Object
Present Progressive	Active:	Rita	is writing	a letter.
	Passive:	A letter	is being written	by Rita.
Past Progressive	Active:	Rita	was writing	a letter.
	Passive:	A letter	was being written	by Rita.
Past Perfect	Active:	Rita	had written	a letter.
	Passive:	A letter	had been written	by Rita.
Future II	Active:	Rita	will have written	a letter.
	Passive:	A letter	will have been written	by Rita.
Conditional I	Active:	Rita	would write	a letter.
	Passive:	A letter	would be written	by Rita.
Conditional II	Active:	Rita	would have written	a letter.
	Passive:	A letter	would have been written	by Rita.

A few examples with **Interrogative sentences**:

### Active voice

1. Do you love him?
2. Did he break window?
3. Have you taught the boy?
4. What do you want?
5. Why did she beat the servant?
6. When did you write the letter?
7. Where will you spend your holidays?
8. How will you cross the river?
9. Have you helped him?
10. Will you teach me?

### Passive voice

- Is he loved by you?  
 Was the window broken by him?  
 Has the boy been taught by you?  
 What is wanted by you?  
 Why was the servant beaten by her?  
 When was the letter written by you?  
 Where will your holidays be spent by you?  
 How will the river be crossed by you?  
 Has he been helped by you?  
 Will I be taught by you?

A few examples with **Imperative sentences**: (Imperative sentences express command, order, request, etc.)

Active voice	Passive voice
1. Please post this letter.	You are requested to post this letter.
2. Shut the door.	You are ordered to shut the door.
3. Work hard.	You are advised to work hard.
4. Light the lamp.	Let the lamp be lighted.
5. Never give up hope.	Let hope never be given up.
6. Never tell a lie.	Let a lie never be told. <i>Or</i> A lie should never be told.

## Passive Sentences with Two Objects

Rewriting an active sentence with two objects in passive voice means that one of the two objects becomes the subject, the other one remains an object. Which object to transform into a subject depends on what you want to put the focus on.

	Subject	Verb	Object 1	Object 2
Active:	Rita	wrote	a letter	to me.
Passive:	A letter	was written	to me	by Rita.
Passive:	I	was written	a letter	by Rita.

As you can see in the examples, adding by Rita does not sound very elegant. That's why it is usually dropped.

### Personal and Impersonal Passive

Personal Passive simply means that the object of the active sentence becomes the subject of the passive sentence. So every verb that needs an object (transitive verb) can form a personal passive.

Example: They build houses. – Houses are built.

Verbs without an object (**intransitive verb**) normally **cannot** form a personal passive sentence (as there is no object that can become the subject of the passive sentence). If you want to use an intransitive verb in passive voice, you need an impersonal construction – therefore this passive is called Impersonal Passive.

Example: He says – It is said

**Impersonal Passive** is **not** as **common in English** as in some other languages (e.g. German, Latin). In **English, Impersonal Passive is only possible with verbs of perception** (e. g. say, think, know).

Example: They say that women live longer than men. – It is said that women live longer than men.

Although Impersonal Passive is possible here, Personal Passive is more common.

Example: They say that women live longer than men. – Women are said to live longer than men.

The subject of the subordinate clause (women) goes to the beginning of the sentence; the verb of perception is put into passive voice. The rest of the sentence is added using an infinitive construction with 'to' (certain auxiliary verbs and that are dropped).

Sometimes the term Personal Passive is used in English lessons if the indirect object of an active sentence is to become the subject of the passive sentence.

### **When do you use passive voice?**

In some sentences, passive voice can be perfectly acceptable. You might use it in the following cases:

#### **The actor (subject) is unknown:**

The cave paintings of Lascaux were made in the Upper Old Stone Age. [We don't know who made them.]

#### **The actor (subject) is irrelevant:**

An experimental solar power plant will be built in the Australian desert. [We are not interested in who is building it.]

#### **You want to be vague about who is responsible:**

Mistakes were made. [you don't want to blame anyone specifically]

#### **You are talking about a general truth:**

English is spoken all over the world. [By whomever, whenever.]

#### **You want to emphasize the person or thing acted on:**

For example, it may be your main topic:

Insulin was first discovered in 1921 by researchers at the University of Toronto. It is still the only treatment available for diabetes.

#### **You are writing in a scientific genre that traditionally relies on passive voice:**

Passive voice is often preferred in lab reports and scientific research papers, most notably in the Materials and Methods section:

The sodium hydroxide was dissolved in water. This solution was then titrated with hydrochloric acid.

## **Passive Voice: special cases**

- PASSIVE WITH GET

In informal conversation, GET is often used instead of To Be.

I got fired yesterday (= I was fired yesterday)

If you get robbed, report to the police

- PASSIVE WITH TO HAVE

have + object + past participle

The idea behind this construction is "I got someone to do something for me" (especially when you pay for the service)

I had my car cleaned = I employed someone to clean my car

I'll have my hair cut = I'll pay a hair-dresser to cut my hair

I've had my roof repaired = I've hired someone to repair my roof

I'm having my kids looked after = A friend's taking care of them for me

### **Compare:**

- I cut my hair yesterday I did it myself, so I probably look horrible

- I had my hair cut yesterday I went to the hairdresser's and they cut my hair

In this construction "to have" is a normal verb, so it needs DO

Do you have your windows cleaned every month? - No, I don't have them cleaned so often

Again, we can use GET instead of HAVE in colloquial speech

He got his room painted

I'm getting all my floors polished

- A SENTENCE AS THE SUBJECT

When the object of the active voice is a whole sentence (connected with that), we have again two possibilities (second one more used):

They say (that) he is ill

It is said (that) he is ill

He is said to be ill

- VERBS OF OPINION

Something similar happens with verbs of opinion: say, think, expect, know, believe, understand, consider, find... These verbs may use the construction of verbs with two objects (1) or verbs followed by a sentence (2) as seen above (again, second option is most frequent):

1- They considered me a tourist

It was considered (that) I was a tourist

I was considered to be a tourist

2- They think (that) I am a spy

I am thought (that) I was a spy

I am thought to be a spy

- IMPERATIVE FORM IN THE PASSIVE VOICE

To change an imperative form into the passive voice we use the construction: LET + OBJECT + BE/GET + Past Participle

Serve the best wine - Let the best wine be served.

Don't speak a word here - Let a word not be spoken here.

In the active form we are specifically telling you to do something, in the passive version we want the action to be done, by you or by somebody else, it doesn't matter.

The passive imperative is rare and sounds very formal or old-fashioned.

**A few useful examples:**

**Active voice**

1. Grass grows over the fields.
2. Someone has stolen my pen.
3. People say that he is a rich man.
4. It is time to ring the bell.
5. Your behaviour surprises me.
6. I know him.
7. Music interests me.
8. This bottle contains milk.
9. Twelve months make a year.
10. One must do one's duty.

**Passive voice**

The fields are overgrown with grass.  
 My pen has been stolen.  
 It is said that he is a rich man.  
 It is time for the bell to be rung.  
 I am surprised at your behaviour.  
 He is known to me.  
 I am interested in music.  
 Milk is contained in this bottle.  
 A year is made of twelve months.  
 Duty must be done.

### Exercise 1:

A. Rewrite the following sentences in passive voice:

- a. I want to do this work.
- b. Trees give us oxygen to breathe.
- c. People assume that he has a lot of money.
- d. Reema knows me well.
- e. The student's behaviour surprised the teacher.
- f. You have got to do it very secretly.
- g. Type this e-mail at once.
- h. Did they pay the bill?
- i. Invite all your friends to your birthday party.
- j. Is the doctor examining the patient?

### Exercise 2:

**Complete the text below by putting the verbs in the correct form in each gap. (Remember, you cannot put passive form everywhere. So read the text carefully and use the verb forms wisely.)**

#### The Australian Open Tennis Championships

The Championships a) \_\_\_\_\_ (run) by Tennis Australia, formerly the LTAA, and b) \_\_\_\_\_

(play) in 1905 first at the Warehouseman's Cricket Ground in St Kilda Road, Melbourne. Historically, the tournament c) \_\_\_\_\_ (play) in the various states of Australia; however, in 1972 it d) \_\_\_\_\_ (decide) to keep the Open in the city that e) \_\_\_\_\_ (attract) the greatest patronage. Melbourne was that city, and Kooyong Lawn Tennis Club was the selected venue. Since then the event f) \_\_\_\_\_ (grow) in stature and popularity, both in Australia and internationally. As the event g) \_\_\_\_\_ (grow), so too did the need to h) \_\_\_\_\_ (upgrade) and i) \_\_\_\_\_ (improve) facilities.

Flinders Park j) \_\_\_\_\_ (build) when the State Government k) \_\_\_\_\_ (realise) the existing facilities were not adequate for a Grand Slam tournament. Construction of the Centre, a multi-purpose venue, l) \_\_\_\_\_ (commence) in 1986 and m) \_\_\_\_\_ (complete) in January 1988, to be the scene of the 1988 Ford Australian Open. Further development to the venue n) \_\_\_\_\_

(occur) during 1995, with these works o) \_\_\_\_\_ (complete) for the 1996 event. The move to Flinders Park was an immediate success with an 80% increase in attendance on the previous year at Kooyong. The venue name change from Flinders Park to Melbourne Park p) \_\_\_\_\_ (occur) on Monday 29 January, 1996.