

## Reference: Passive Voice

### Formation:

- Verbs in English can be in the **active** or **passive** voice. The active voice is used when the subject is the "**doer**" of the action. The passive voice is used when the subject is the "**receiver**" of the action, the thing or person to which something happened.

ACTIVE VOICE:        Some students developed the plan.

SUBJECT	VERB/ACTION	OBJECT
<u>Some students</u>	developed	the plan.

Here the subject performs the action; it is the "doer" of the action.

PASSIVE VOICE:        The plan was developed by some students.

SUBJECT	VERB/ACTION	OBJECT
<u>The plan</u>	was developed	by some students.

Here the subject "receives" the action; it is the "receiver" of the action.

- The **passive verb form** is a form of the verb "**be**" + **the past participle** of the verb. The sentences below show how the passive voice is used in different tenses.

#### a) Simple Present

Active:        They manufacture radios in that factory.

Passive:        Radios are manufactured in that factory.

#### b) Present Continuous

Active:        They are showing that movie in 10 theatres.

Passive:        That movie is being shown in 10 theatres.

#### c) Simple Past

Active:        They built that hospital 10 years ago.

Passive:        That hospital was built 10 years ago.



d) **Past Continuous**

Active: We were discussing the plan when someone came in.  
Passive: The plan was being discussed when someone came in.

e) **Present Perfect**

Active: They have completed most of the work.  
Passive: Most of the work has been completed.

f) **Future**

Active: The company will spend money on training.  
Passive: Money will be spent on training.

g) **Modals**

The passive can be used with all the modals.

*Examples:* You must return the books in three weeks. (active)  
The books must be returned in three weeks. (passive)  
I can arrange a meeting. (active)  
A meeting can be arranged. (passive)

3. The three parts of a sentence in the passive voice are (a) the **subject** (the "receiver"), (b) the **verb**, and (c) the preposition "**by**" followed by the "**doer**" of the action. We can leave out part (c) if we don't know who or what did the action (the "doer"). Part (c) is also unnecessary when the "doer" is already known.

i) (a) The bridge (b) was designed (c) by an Italian architect.

ii) (a) The front window of the store (b) had been smashed.  
(We don't say "by \_\_\_\_" because we don't know who smashed it.)

iii) (a) Many kinds of fruit (b) are grown (c) in the Okanagan.  
(We don't say "by \_\_\_\_" because we already know that farmers grow them.)

Passive: The plan was being discussed when someone came in.

e) **Present Perfect**

Active: They have completed most of the work.  
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Passive: Most of the work has been completed.

f) **Future**

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A meeting can be arranged. (passive)

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### Meaning and Use:

1. We use the passive voice when the "receiver" of the action is more important than the "doer" of the action.

*Example:*    active voice:

The CBC produced that movie. (The sentence is mainly about the CBC, the "doer" of the action.)

passive voice:

That movie was produced by the CBC. (The sentence is mainly about the movie, the "receiver" of the action.)

2. We often use the passive voice in newspaper writing, business and scientific reports and in descriptions of processes.

Passive Voice

Directions: Fill in the blanks with the correct **voice** (active or passive) and the correct **tense** of the verb in parentheses.

*Example:* She forgot what I had told her.  
(forget)

1. The usher \_\_\_\_\_ me a seat just as the concert started.  
(find)
2. My aunt \_\_\_\_\_ me a cheque last Christmas.  
(send)
3. It was a good thing nothing \_\_\_\_\_ from my apartment since I had no insurance.  
(steal)
4. He \_\_\_\_\_ a woman from Fiji.  
(marry)
5. She \_\_\_\_\_ her job over a pay dispute.  
(quit)
6. A strange man \_\_\_\_\_ near the factory just before the explosion.  
(see)
7. I \_\_\_\_\_ the new secretary to the rest of the staff.  
(introduce)
8. Mark \_\_\_\_\_ the kitchen and dining room next summer.  
(renovate)
9. I'm quite sure an arrangement \_\_\_\_\_ to meet you at the airport.  
(can, make)
10. Everyone \_\_\_\_\_ me when they heard the news.  
(congratulate)
11. I'm afraid that wisdom tooth \_\_\_\_\_.  
(must, take out)
12. The machine \_\_\_\_\_ automatically. You don't have to do anything.  
(turn off)
13. Sometimes bears \_\_\_\_\_ near garbage dumps.  
(can, find)

Directions: Fill in the blanks with the correct **tense** and **voice** of the verb in parentheses.

Fishermen and sailors sometimes claim to have seen monsters in the sea. People have often laughed at these stories, but scientists know that many of these (know)  
'monsters' which from time to time are simply strange fish.  
1. (see)  
Occasionally, unusual creatures onto the shore by the waves,  
2. (wash)  
but so far very few at sea.  
3. (catch)

Some time ago, however, a peculiar fish near Madagascar.  
4. (catch)  
small fishing boat miles out to sea by a powerful fish which  
5. (pull)  
the bait on the fisherman's line. The fisherman  
6. (take)  
that he something strange, so he  
7. (realize) 8. (catch)  
not to damage it in any way. When the creature  
9. (try)  
to shore, it and  
10. (bring) 11. (measure)  
to be over 13 feet long. It a head like  
12. (find) 13. (have)  
a horse, big blue eyes, a shining silver skin, and a bright red tail. It  
14. (send)  
to a museum where it by a scientist. He it  
15. (examine) 16. (identify)  
as an oarfish. Very few of these creatures because they  
17. (ever, see)  
at a depth of six hundred feet below the surface of the ocean.  
18. (live)

Directions: In the blank spaces, use the correct form of the verb, along with an appropriate **modal** (**have to, must, should, ought to, may, might, can**). Write in the **passive voice**.

*Example:* There's no hurry. The bill doesn't have to be paid until  
(not pay)  
the end of the year.

1. I think they \_\_\_\_\_ for behaving so badly.  
(punish)
2. This dish \_\_\_\_\_ immediately or \_\_\_\_\_  
(eat) (freeze)  
for later use.
3. Seat belts \_\_\_\_\_ during take-off.  
(fasten)
4. This medicine \_\_\_\_\_ together with alcohol.  
(not, take)
5. The sign says that reference books \_\_\_\_\_ from the library.  
(not, remove)
6. Children \_\_\_\_\_ by an adult if they want to see this film.  
(accompany)
7. These sheets look clean enough, so they \_\_\_\_\_.  
(not, wash)
8. We \_\_\_\_\_ a raise later this year, but I'm not sure.  
(give)
9. Students \_\_\_\_\_ unless they pass all portions of the test.  
(not, promote)
10. This knife looks dull. It \_\_\_\_\_.  
(sharpen)
11. Take your passport along, just in case. You \_\_\_\_\_ for it at  
(ask)  
the border.
12. There is a chance of showers tomorrow, so the baseball game \_\_\_\_\_.  
(cancel)

**Directions:** Write a passage about wine-making by expanding the skeletal sentences into full-length sentences. Use the **passive voice** of the verbs in parentheses.

*Example:* Wine - (can - make) - many fruits - but - fruit - that - (use) - most often - grape.

Wine can be made from many fruits but, the fruit that is used most often is the grape.

1. Grapes - (grow) - and - wine - (drink) - many parts - world.  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. The grapes - (check) - regularly - for - acid - sugar - content.  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. They - (pick) - when - properly - (ripe) - by - sun.  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Next - grapes - (place) - bins - and - bins - (lift) - large - trucks.  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. The grapes - (transport) - place - where - they - (process).  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. This - place - (call) - winery.  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Here - grapes - (crush) - rolling cylinders - and - juice - (remove).  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. The juice - (pump) - wooden vats.  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. It - then - (ferment) - several months - years.  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Finally - it (put) - bottles - and - (send) - stores - where - it (sell).  
\_\_\_\_\_