

The Passive Voice

Grammar explanation

We use the passive voice to change the focus of the sentence.

My bike was stolen. (passive – focus on *my bike*) ACTIVE S Someone stole my bike
Someone stole my bike. (active – focus on *someone*)

We often use the passive:

- when we prefer not to mention who or what does the action (for example, it's not known, it's obvious or we don't want to say)
- so that we can start a sentence with the most important or most logical information
- in more formal or scientific writing.

How we make the passive

We make the passive using the verb *be* + past participle. We start the sentence with the object.

Avatar was directed by James Cameron.

Object + *be* *In tense of the Active sentence* + past participle

JAMES CAMERON DIRECTED AVATAR

LEILA MADE NICE CAKES NICE CAKES WERE MADE BY LEILA

WAR DESTROYS BUILDINGS AND KILLS PEOPLE

PASSIVE VOICE: BUILDINGS ARE DESTROYED AND PEOPLE ARE KILLED BY WAR

SOMEONE IS HACKING US. PRESENT CONTINUOUS

PASSIVE/WE ARE BEING HACKED.

It is not always necessary to add who or what did the action.

My flight is cancelled.

↓ ↓ ↓
Object + *be* + past participle

Only the form of *be* changes to make the tense. The past participle stays the same. Here are examples of the passive in its most common tenses.

Tense	Example	Structure
Present simple	<i>Alioli is made from oil, garlic and salt.</i>	<i>is/are</i> + past participle
Present	<i>The hall is being painted this week.</i>	<i>is/are being</i> + past participle

Tense	Example	Structure
continuous		
Past simple	<i>John F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963.</i>	<i>was/were + past participle</i>
Past continuous	<i>The signs were being put up last week.</i>	<i>was/were being + past participle</i>
Present perfect	<i>Oranges have been grown here for centuries.</i>	<i>have been + past participle</i>
Past perfect	<i>When he got home, he found that his flat had been burgled.</i>	<i>had been + past participle</i>
Future simple	<i>The work will be finished next week.</i>	<i>will be + past participle</i>

Rewrite the sentences in the passive voice.

EXERCISE A

1. John collects money. -
2. Anna opened the window. -
3. We have done our homework. - I will ask a question. -
4. He can cut out the picture. -
5. The sheep ate a lot. -
6. We do not clean our rooms. -
7. William will not repair the car. -
8. Did Sue draw this circle? -
9. Could you feed the dog? - ?

EXERCISE B

10. The war next week (**DECLARE**).
11. Your homework by tomorrow afternoon. (**MUST FINISH**)
12. That house since I was a child. (**NOT PAINT**)
13. Smoking in this hotel (**NOT ALLOW**)
14. After all the flights were cancelled the tourists checked in at the airport hotel. (**CANCEL**)
15. The car hasn't been washed for over a week (**NOT WASH**).
16. He a new contract last year (**GIVE**)
17. This song by the Beatles in 1967. (**WRITE**)
18. The earth if we try hard enough to do something (**CAN SAVE**)
19. The new bridge at the moment. (**BUILD**)

EXERCISE (C)

20. • He is going to publish a new book.

A new book .

21. • They haven't started the game yet.

The game yet.

22. • They could have broken the window.

The window .

23. • Have they surprised you?

Have ?

24. ☐ Where were they taking the taxis?

Where ?

25. ☐ We have to sign all the documents.

All the documents .

26. • Nobody can lift that stone.

The stone .

27. ☐ Did they sign the contract?

?

28. ☐ The student had cleaned the board before the teacher came in.

The board before the teacher came in.

29. ☐ They didn't return the books.

The books .

30. ☐ They are serving dinner now.

Dinner now.

31. ☐ The teacher punished the pupils.

The pupils by the teacher.