

GRAMMAR

The passive voice

LEVEL

Upper-Intermediate
(B2)

NUMBER

EN_B2_1062G

LANGUAGE

English



Learning outcomes

- I can identify the passive voice in a range of sentences and explain why it's being used.
- I can comfortably use the passive voice with a variety of different tenses.

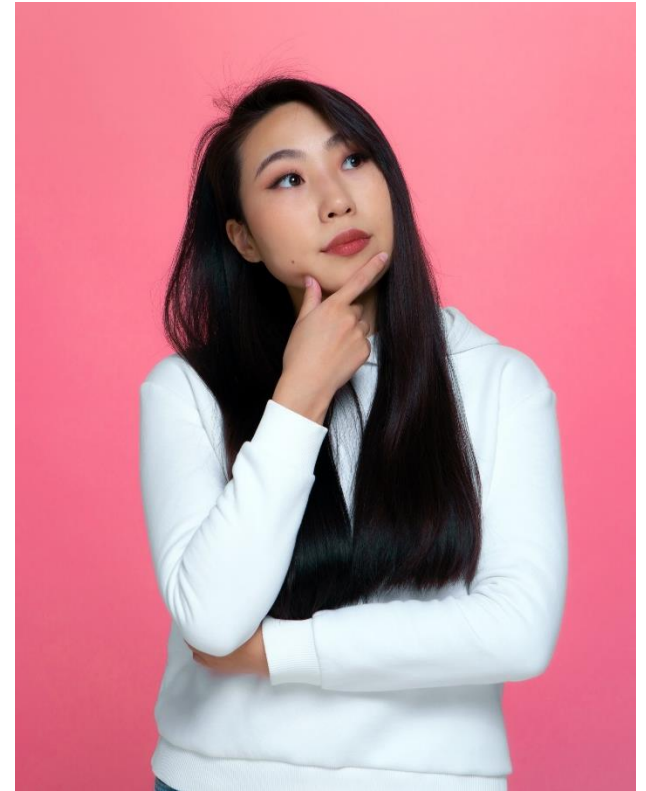


Warm-up

Brainstorm as a class.

**You've definitely
learned about the
passive voice
before...**

**What do you
remember about it?**



Complete the two grammar summaries

active

passive

by

past
participle

to be

Active or passive voice?

The room is being painted by my dad is an example of a sentence that uses the _____ voice.

The same sentence using the _____ voice would be:

My dad is painting the room.

Forming the passive voice

We form the passive voice with a form of **the verb** _____ + the _____ of **the main verb**.

In a passive sentence, we **don't need** to say *who* does the action.

If we do want to say who does it, we use the **preposition** _____.



Categorise the sentences

1 Olive oil is traditionally produced in Greece.

2 The party has already started.

3 The first fast food restaurant was opened in the USA in 1916.

4 I'm really looking forward to meeting you.

5 Plenty of sales have been generated by the new marketing campaign.

6 The train is likely to arrive on time.

Active voice

Passive voice

Transforming from active to passive voice

- **Read** through these examples.
- **Clarify** any doubts with your teacher.

Journalists **follow** him everywhere.



He **is followed** everywhere (by journalists).

Tom **is increasing** our rent.



Our rent **is being increased** (by Tom).

A flood **destroyed** the houses.



The houses **were destroyed** (by a flood).

Someone **has taken** my pen from my desk.



My pen **has been taken** from my desk.

The company **was hiring** lots of people.



Lots of people **were being hired** (by the company).

By 2020, the artist **had sold** 10 million copies of the album.



By 2020, 10 million copies of the album **had been sold**.



Fill in the table

	Active voice	Passive voice
Present simple	People in Switzerland speak French, German or Italian.	1. <i>French, German or Italian are spoken by people in Switzerland.</i>
Present continuous	2. _____	The event is being cancelled by the organisers.
Past simple	The President ruined the economy.	3. _____
Past continuous	4. _____	Lots of time was being wasted by the employees.
Present perfect	The government has announced further cuts to health and education.	5. _____
Past perfect	6. _____	By the 1960s, a cure for tuberculosis had been found by scientists.





Fill in the gaps

Use a passive construction.

1. The first car _____ (*invent*) by a British engineer.
2. Last year, around 375 million hamburgers _____ (*eat*) every day in the United States.
3. The next Olympic Games _____ (*hold*) in 2026.
4. By the year 2000, almost 2 million pairs of Levi's jeans _____ (*purchase*) worldwide.
5. Over 25 billion text messages _____ (*send*) every day around the world.





Discuss



Which facts on the last slide do you think are true?



Decide in breakout rooms or together as a class.

When do we use the passive voice?

- In English, the most important information often comes at the **beginning** of a sentence.
- We can use the **passive voice** therefore to change the **focus** of a sentence.

Example

Alex stole my watch.

Explanation

Active sentence – focus is on *Alex*

My watch was stolen.

Passive sentence – focus now on *my watch*

When do we use the passive voice?

- We can also use the passive voice when **we don't know** who did an action, we **prefer not to say** or when it is **not important**.
- Remember if we *do* want to say *who*, we add **by** + **the person** after the past participle.

Example

My watch was stolen.

Explanation

Perhaps I don't know who stole it.

**My watch was stolen
by a group of teenagers.**

I know who stole it, but want to put the focus of the sentence on *my watch*.



Make the words in bold the focus

Decide if you want to include who does the action or not. **Explain** your choice.

1 The police arrested **the man** last night.



The man was arrested last night.

2 People in Britain send **350 million letters** every year.



3 We have finished **all the interviews**.



4 A colleague is reviewing **Nora's report**.



5 The children had already eaten **all the biscuits** by the time I arrived.



6 The airline was cancelling **hundreds of flights** a week.



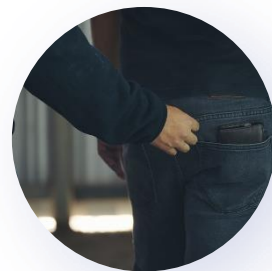
Passive with *get*

- In informal speech, we can use **get + past participle** instead of **be + past participle**.
- The passive with **get** can suggest either an unexpected or a negative experience.



I **got accepted** into Yale University – I can't believe it!

My watch **got stolen** while I was in Barcelona!





Form passive sentences with *get*

Complete the sentences.

- 1 I don't know why my office is so dirty. It _____ (*clean*) every week!
- 2 Tom and Paul _____ (*marry*) last week in Las Vegas.
- 3 Did you hear that I _____ (*promote*) next year? I'm so happy!
- 4 Footballers _____ (*pay*) far too much money. What a joke!
- 5 I saw on social media that Mary and her husband _____ (*divorce*). How sad!



Circle the more appropriate option

Explain your choice.

1. Did you hear that Dave *got / was* arrested last night?
2. A twenty-four year-old man from Brentwood *got / was* arrested last night on suspicion of burglary.
3. Mr Parker *got / was* fired for stealing money from the firm.
4. John *got / was* fired for taking the money!



Look for clues as to how
formal the sentence is!



Future simple passive

- We construct the passive voice with the **future simple** using:
 - **will be** + **past participle**

Active voice

We will finish the project before noon.

She will give a speech on time management.

Passive voice

The project **will be finished** before noon.

A speech **will be given** on time management.

Put into the passive voice

1 I will finish the project by tomorrow.



The project **will be finished** by tomorrow.

2 They will open the restaurant next month.



3 We will invite two hundred people to our wedding.



4 The company will cover all your expenses.



5 The teacher will announce the winner next week.



6 UPS will deliver your package tomorrow.





Fill in the gaps

1. **Choose** the correct verb.
2. **Put** it into the **future simple passive**.

1 The meeting _____ next Tuesday.

2 A decision _____ in the coming weeks.

3 Our product _____ in Europe and Asia.

4 The report _____ out tomorrow morning.

5 The staff _____ about the new management in this afternoon's meeting.

hold
make
send
tell
sell

The fortune teller

1. **Write** four predictions about what **will be done** in the future. **Use** the boxes to help you.
2. **Share** your predictions with the class. Which things are likely or unlikely to happen?

One day...
Next year...
Tomorrow...
In a few
years...

You...
Our food
Our clothes
Your house
Your work

Eat
Visit
Clean
Make
Sold

robots
an alien
the President
an artist





End of the lesson

Idiom

Rome wasn't built in a day

Meaning: you cannot expect to do important things in a short space of time.

Example: I've been painting this wall for ages. Then again, **Rome wasn't built in a day!**



Additional practice



Identify the tense

1 *The house **is being built**.*

2 *The house **has been built**.*

3 *The house **was built**.*

4 *The house **is built**.*

5 *The house **was being built**.*

6 *The house **will be built**.*

7 *The house **had been built**.*

a Past simple passive

b Past perfect passive

c Past continuous passive

d Present continuous passive

e Future simple passive

f Present simple passive

g Present perfect passive



Passives quiz

Choose the correct option.

1 The Acropolis _____ thousands of years ago.

a. was built

b. is built

2 Your query _____ within 14 days.

a. will answer

b. will be answered

3 By this time next year, cars _____ at this factory for over half a century.

a. will be made

b. will have been made



Passives quiz

Choose the correct option.



4 Rice _____ for thousands of years.

a. has been eaten

b. is being eaten

5 My car _____ at the moment, so I'm using my bike to get to work.

a. is being repaired

b. is repaired

6 The case _____ for years until a witness came forward with new information.

a. has been open

b. had been open



Fill in the gaps

Use **get** + past participle. Be careful with your choice of **tense**!

1. My friends Sally and Alison _____ (*marry*) in September next year.
2. I can't believe you _____ (*fire*) from your job! You worked so hard!
3. Each year approximately 1.5 million people _____ (*divorce*) in the United States alone.
4. Keep an eye on your bag! Bags _____ (*steal*) all the time in this area!
5. My friends and I _____ (*take*) to the police station that same day. The officers wasted no time in asking us how we knew Jamie.





Answer key

P. 4: 1. passive, 2. active, 3. *to be*, 4. past participle, 5. by

P. 5: **Active voice:** 2, 4, 6

Passive voice: 1, 3, 5

P. 7: 2. The organisers are cancelling the event.
3. The economy was ruined by the President.
4. The employees were wasting lots of time.
5. Further cuts to health and education have been announced by the government.
6. By the 1960s, scientists had found a cure for tuberculosis.

P. 8: 1. was invented
2. were eaten OR were being eaten
3. are being held
4. had been purchased
5. are sent

P. 9: 2 and 5 are true;
1, 3, and 4 are false (1 - a German, 3 - 2024, 4 - 2 billion pairs)



Answer key

- P. 12:**
2. 350 million letter are sent every year in Britain.
 3. All the interviews have been finished.
 4. Nora's report is being reviewed (by a colleague).
 5. All the biscuits had already been eaten (by the children) by the time I arrived.
 6. Hundreds of flights a week were being cancelled (by the airline).

Note: In (2) and (3) the agent (the person who performed the action) is not needed. (2) only people can send letters and (3) the focus is on the interviews, not the people. For (4), (5) & (6), adding the agent is optional.

- P. 14:**
1. gets cleaned
 2. got married
 3. am getting promoted
 4. get paid
 5. are getting divorced OR have got divorced OR got divorced.



Answer key

- P. 15:**
1. *got* (informal speech, so *get* + past participle)
 2. *was* (more formal speech like a news report, so *was* + past participle)
 3. *was* (more formal speech using surname, so *was* + past participle)
 4. *got* (informal speech, so *get* + past participle)
- P. 17:**
2. The new restaurant **will be opened** next month.
 3. Two hundred people **will be invited** to our wedding.
 4. All your expenses **will be covered** (by the company).
 5. The winner **will be announced** next week.
 6. Your package **will be delivered** tomorrow.
- P. 18:**
1. will be held, 2. will be made, 3. will be sold, 4. will be sent, 5. will be told
- P. 23:**
1. d, 2. g, 3. a, 4. f, 5. c, 6. e, 7. b
- P. 24-25:**
1. a, 2. b, 3. b, 4. a, 5. a, 6. b
- P. 26:**
1. are getting married OR will get married
 2. got fired
 3. get divorced
 4. get stolen
 5. got taken



Summary

Reviewing passive vs active voice

- ***The room is being painted by my dad*** is an example of a sentence that uses the passive voice.
- The same sentence using the active voice would be: ***My dad is painting the room.***

Reviewing how to form the passive voice

- We form the passive voice with a form of **to be** + the past participle of **the main verb**.
- In a passive sentence, we **don't need** to say *who* does the action.
- If we do want to say who does it, we use the **preposition by**.

Using the passive voice

- To change the **focus** of a sentence, to put important info at the beginning: e.g. *My watch was stolen.*
- When the subject is **unknown** or not **important**: e.g. *350 million letters are sent in Britain every year.*

Future simple passive

- We construct the passive voice with the **future simple** using: **will be + past participle**.
- *The project **will be finished** before noon.*
- *A speech **will be given** on time management.*



Vocabulary

traditionally

to generate

copies

cuts

on suspicion of...

