Grammar Reference

Continuous passive

Use

We use the continuous passive the same way as regular continuous forms but when the agent, that is the person or organisation that is doing the action of the verb, is not known or is not as important as the action itself.

Form

be + **being** (present participle of **to be**) + **past participle**

It has present, past and future uses but is not used in a perfect structure.

> I **am being chased.**
> He **was being watched.**
> They **were being followed.**
> The company **is being investigated** by the tax office**.**
> The property **will be being decorated** that week.

Negative

> I**'m not being chased.**
> He **wasn't being watched.**
> They **weren't being followed.**
> The company **isn't being investigated** by the tax office.

Question

> **Am** I **being chased**?
> **Was** he **being watched**?
> **Were** they **being followed**?
> **Is** the company **being investigated**?

Passive = less direct

Using the passive can sound more polite because it is less direct. It means you don't have to say **you**. This is less personal and sounds less like an order, accusation or criticism.

Have you done it? => Has it been done?

You moved it! => It's been moved

It is also used when you want to avoid mentioning another person's name.

Peter told me to rearrange the meeting => I was told to rearrange the meeting

It's also useful when you don't want to emphasise your own responsibility for something.

I dropped your phone => Your phone was dropped