

## THE PASSIVE

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### Active and passive voice

Verbs are said to be either *active*:

- The executive committee approved the new policy.
- The House will reject the new bill.

or *passive*:

- The new policy was approved by the executive committee.
- The new bill will be rejected by the House.

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Sometimes a statement in passive is more polite than active voice:

- Many mistakes were made.

The focus is on the fact that many mistakes were made, but we do not blame anyone.

- You have made many mistakes.
- The Prime Minister made many mistakes.

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### All tenses...

Present simple	Those computers <b>are made</b> in Japan.
Present continuous	Lunch <b>is being</b> cooked now.
Past simple	The work <b>wasn't finished</b> in time.
Past continuous	Breakfast <b>was being prepared</b> when I arrived.
Present perfect	Those letters <b>have been</b> typed by Tom.
Past perfect	The fire <b>had already been lit</b> .
Future (GOING TO)	John's car <b>is going to be repaired</b> tomorrow.
Future (SHALL/WILL)	The dinner <b>will be served</b> at eight o'clock.

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### With modals...

<b>must</b>	That card <b>must be posted</b> immediately.
<b>can/could</b>	That homework <b>can be done</b> tomorrow.
<b>should</b>	The police <b>should be notified</b> immediately.
<b>have to</b>	That translation <b>has to be finished</b> by nine o'clock.
<b>may/might</b>	The meeting <b>may be postponed</b> because of the strike.

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### Form

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

How to form a passive sentence when an active sentence is given:

- the object of the "active" sentence becomes the subject in the "passive" sentence and is the main focus

- the subject of the "active" sentence is left out or dropped in the "passive", it is not known or it is not the main focus

- A letter was written.
- The law is approved.
- The fax will be sent.

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**Passive sentences with by**

We are not interested in the "doer" of an action in a passive sentence. When we want to mention the "doer", we use the preposition **by**. The whole phrase is called **by-agent** in English.

- a) The letter was sent **by Mary**.
- b) The law is approved **by the House**.
- c) The fax will be sent **by the secretary**.

When we don't know who was the "doer" of the action, we use *someone* or *somebody* in the active sentence. We leave out these words in the passive sentence.

- d) Somebody took my coat by mistake.
- e) My coat was taken by mistake.

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The passive is particularly useful (even recommended) in two situations:

*When it is more important to draw our attention to the person or thing acted upon:*

- a) The victim was injured during the early morning hours and she is currently being treated in the emergency room.

*When the actor in the situation is not important, or not known:*

- b) The bank has been robbed twice this month.

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**Write passive sentences in Simple Present.**

- 1)The documents / print
- 2)The window / open
- 3)The shoes / buy
- 4)The car / wash
- 5)The litter / throw away
- 6)The letter / send
- 7)The book / read / not
- 8)The songs / sing / not
- 9)The food / eat / not
- 10) The shop / close / not

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**Write passive sentences in Simple Past.**

- 1)The test / write
- 2)The table / set
- 3)The cat / feed
- 4)The lights / switch on
- 5)The house / build
- 6)Dinner / serve
- 7)This computer / sell / not
- 8)The car / stop / not
- 9)The tables / clean / not
- 10) The children / pick up / not

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**Write passive sentences in Present Perfect.**

- 1)The postcard / send
- 2)The pencils / count
- 3)The door / close
- 4)The beds / make
- 5)The mail / write
- 6)The trees / plant
- 7)The money / spend
- 8)The room / book / not
- 9)The rent / pay / not
- 10) The people / inform / not

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**Write passive sentences in Future (will and be going to)**

- 1)The exhibition / visit
- 2)The windows / clean
- 3)The message / read
- 4)The thief / arrest
- 5)The photo / take
- 6)These songs / sing
- 7)The sign / see / not
- 8)A dictionary / use / not
- 9)Credit cards / accept / not
- 10) The ring / find / not

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Each of the sentences below is in the PASSIVE VOICE. Write the correct form of each verb in brackets:

1. Tom was \_\_\_\_\_ many times to stop talking in class. (tell)
2. He was \_\_\_\_\_ by the movie. (disappoint)
3. He was \_\_\_\_\_ by his brother to go to the beach. (convince)
4. The present was \_\_\_\_\_ to her by her co-worker. (give)
5. The thief was \_\_\_\_\_ by the police. (catch)
6. This book is being \_\_\_\_\_ by all the students. (read)
7. A new shopping mall is going to be \_\_\_\_\_ in Pasadena. (build)
8. Many mistakes were \_\_\_\_\_ by the students. (make)
9. The meeting was \_\_\_\_\_ in the conference room. (hold)

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Convert the following sentences into the passive voice.

1. Jennifer bought the cake.
2. Millions of people visit Cape Town every year.
3. Emily and Patrick ate my chocolate!
4. Sam painted a beautiful picture.
5. Kevin drives Kate to work every day.
6. Peter killed the rat.
7. Caroline eats two bars of chocolate daily.
8. The waves hit the ship.
9. Sophie cleans the kitchen.
10. Everyone watches the fireworks.

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Make passive sentences.


- 1) This wall / paint / my father / by / was
- 2) Planes / fly / are / pilots / by
- 3) Cricket / play / in / India / is
- 4) you / by / This picture / was / take
- 5) The hospital / open / the Queen / was / by
- 6) Glass / make / is / from / sand
- 7) The book / write / Shakespeare

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Add the missing word in the sentences:

been booked by cleaning had not said was

- 1) The bridge was designed an American engineer.
- 2) This seat has already been.
- 3) My car has stolen twice.
- 4) Accommodation is included in the price.
- 5) It officially announced that there will not be a tax increase.
- 6) The door been left unlocked.
- 7) This room needs. It's really dirty !
- 8) It is that the Prime Minister will soon resign.

 Rewrite these sentences using the passive

You are not allowed to smoke in here. - Smoking  in here.

People speak hundreds of languages in India. - Hundreds of languages  in India.

Trucks deliver the goods to the warehouse. - The goods  to the warehouse in trucks.

Somebody built the house in 1960. - The house  in 1960.

Somebody has stolen my car. - My car .

Nobody invited me to the party. - I  to the party.

Our manager took the decision. - The decision  by our manager.

We will finish everything tomorrow. - Everything  tomorrow.

Make passive sentences.

- 1) St. Paul's Cathedral / destroy / in 1666.
- 2) Many cars / produce / in the U.S.A.
- 3) Millions of Michael Jackson's records / sell / in the 1980s.
- 4) Yesterday / the football match / watch / by thousands.
- 5) Thousands of bombs / drop / on Germany / in World War II.
- 6) Lady Diana / kill / in a car accident / in 1997.

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**Modals – Passive Voice**

1. Traffic regulations \_\_\_\_\_ by drivers as well as pedestrians. (must/obey)
2. A driver \_\_\_\_\_ by the police. (might/stop)
3. A driver \_\_\_\_\_ to get out of the car. (could/ask)
4. A driver \_\_\_\_\_ to the police station. (might/take)
5. Drunk drivers \_\_\_\_\_ a sobriety test. (may/give)
6. Drivers \_\_\_\_\_ of their rights. (must/inform)
7. A traffic accident \_\_\_\_\_ to the police. (must/report)

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**Change the following sentences to the passive voice.**

1. You must put out all smoking materials.
2. You must fasten the seat belt.
3. They will demonstrate safety precautions.
4. You should read the safety instructions.
5. You can store small packages in the overhead compartment.
6. When the seatbelt light goes off, you may remove the seatbelt.
7. They may serve a meal.
8. They might show a movie.
9. They will serve coffee.

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Directions: Fill in the blanks with the active or the passive voice of the verb in (). Use modals.

1. Safety precautions \_\_\_\_\_.  
(will/demonstrate)
2. Flight attendants \_\_\_\_\_ meals.  
(will/serve)
3. Passengers \_\_\_\_\_ their seatbelts.  
(must/fasten)
4. Passengers \_\_\_\_\_ coffee.  
(will/serve)
5. Passengers \_\_\_\_\_ the safety precautions.  
(should/read)

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6. Passengers \_\_\_\_\_ to put out smoking materials.  
(will/tell)
7. Passengers \_\_\_\_\_ the safety rules.  
(should/obey)
8. A movie \_\_\_\_\_ on some flights.  
(might/show)
9. Some movies \_\_\_\_\_ sex and violence.  
(may/contain)
10. Some viewers \_\_\_\_\_ by sex and bad language.  
(might/offend)

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**Use the given verbs in either active or passive form with the most suitable modal.**

1. The entire valley \_\_\_\_\_ (see) from their mountain home.
2. He is wearing a gold ring on his fourth finger. He \_\_\_\_\_ (marry).
3. According to our teacher, all of our compositions \_\_\_\_\_ (write) in ink. He won't accept papers written in pencil.
4. I found this book on my desk when I came to class. It \_\_\_\_\_ (leave) by one of the students in the earlier class.

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5. Five of the committee members will be unable to attend the next meeting. In my opinion, the meeting \_\_\_\_\_ (postpone).
6. A child \_\_\_\_\_ (not give) everything he or she wants.
7. Your daughter has a good voice. Her interest in singing \_\_\_\_\_ (encourage).
8. Try to speak slowly when you give your speech, If you don't, some of your words \_\_\_\_\_ (misunderstand).

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1. She is very lazy. If you want her to do anything, she \_\_\_\_\_ (**force**) to do it.

2. The hospital in that small town is very old and can no longer serve the needs of the community. A new hospital \_\_\_\_\_ (**build**) years ago.

3. Whales \_\_\_\_\_ (**save**) from extinction.

4. We can't wait any longer! Something \_\_\_\_\_ (**do**) immediately.

5. In my opinion, she \_\_\_\_\_ (**elect**) because she is honest, knowledgeable, and competent.

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6. The class for next semester is too large. It \_\_\_\_\_ (**divide**) in half, but there's not enough money in the budget to hire another teacher.

7. Polly \_\_\_\_\_ (**return**) these books by next Friday.

8. This application \_\_\_\_\_ (**send**) to the personnel department soon.

9. A: Ann didn't expect to see her boss at the labor union meeting.

B: She \_\_\_\_\_ (**surprise**) when she saw him.

A: She was.

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#### Sources:

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