



Esercitazioni di lingua inglese

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The passive voice

- Used often, not just in formal situations.
 - **Why** should you use the passive voice?
- You don't want to say who or what did the action;
- You don't know who did the action;
- The object is the most important part of the sentence (→ you change the focus)

The passive voice

Let's look at this sentence:

The student drank two cups of coffee.

Subject + **Verb** + **Object**

This is an **active** sentence and it has the subject first (the person or thing that does the action to the object), followed by the verb, and finally the object (the person or thing that the action happens to). So, in this example, the subject is 'The student', the verb is 'drank' and the object is 'two cups of coffee'.

However, we don't always need to make sentences this way. We might want to put the object first, or perhaps we don't want to say who did something. This can happen for lots of reasons. In this case, we can use the **passive voice**:

Two cups of coffee were drunk (by the student).

The passive voice

- English speakers frequently use the passive voice. **(A)**
- The passive voice is frequently used by English speakers. **(P)**

WHERE:

Newspapers / scientific reports / legal documents...

The passive voice

Common expressions:

- (to) be **born**:

My mother bore me on September 20th, 1989. → **NO**

I was born on September 20th, 1989.

- 'The tempest' **was written** by W. Shakespeare.
- 'The Godfather' **was directed** by Francis Ford Coppola.
- The national anthem **was sung** by Lady Gaga.

STRUCTURE: BE verb + PAST PARTICIPLE

The passive voice

SIX STEPS:

- The children ate the cake. (A)

1. Identify the Subject, the Verb and the Object.

- The children ate the cake.

S + **V** + **O**

The passive voice

SIX STEPS:

- The children ate the cake. (A)

2. Move the O to become the new S of the sentence.

- The cake

S

The passive voice

SIX STEPS:

- The children ate the cake. (A)
- The cake

3. What is the verb tense in the active sentence?

Ate = Past Simple of the verb 'eat'

The passive voice

SIX STEPS:

- The children ate the cake. (A)

4. Conjugate the verb 'BE'.

- The cake was

The passive voice

SIX STEPS:

- The children ate the cake. (A)

5. Add the Past Participle of the main verb after 'be'.

- The cake was eaten

The passive voice

SIX STEPS:

- The children ate the cake. **(A)**

6. Subject of the active sentence.

- The cake was eaten **(by the children)**. **(P)**

The passive voice

1. The house **was built** in 1893.
2. This car **will be sold** by the weekend.
3. The washing **has been left** out in the rain.
4. Many people's lives **were saved**.

1. The house **was built** **by her grandfather** in 1893.
2. This car **will be sold** **by the salesman** by the weekend.
3. The washing **has been left out** in the rain **by her husband**.
4. Many people's lives **were saved** **by the volunteers**.

The passive voice

TENSE	ACTIVE	PASSIVE
Present Simple	I make a cake	A cake is made
Present Contin.	I'm making a cake	A cake is being made.
Past Simple	I made a cake.	A cake was made.
Past Continuous	I was making a cake.	A cake was being made.
Present Perfect	I have made a cake	A cake has been made.
Past Perfect	I had made a cake.	A cake had been made.
Future Simple	I will make a cake.	A cake will be made.
Future be going to	I'm going to make a cake.	A cake is going to be made.
Modal	I must make a cake.	A cake must be made.
Modal Perfect	I should have made a cake.	A cake should have been made.

The passive voice

- *Someone has stolen my neighbour's car. (A)*

1. Someone has stolen my neighbour's car.

S + V + O

2. My neighbour's car

3. Present Perfect Tense

4. My neighbour's car has been

5. My neighbour's car has been stolen

6. My neighbour's car has been stolen (by someone).

- *My neighbour's car has been stolen.*

The passive voice

- We **made** lots of money in 2002. **(A)**
- Lots of money **was made** (by us) in 2002. **(P)**

- I **will clean** the house on Monday. **(A)**
- The house **will be cleaned** (by me) on Monday. **(P)**

- Tom **has built** the house for his parents. **(A)**
- The house **has been built** (by Tom) for his parents. **(P)**

The passive voice

- **Verbs with two objects**

Some verbs can have two objects; for example, *buy, give, offer, promise, send, sell...*

- Someone gave **the police the information.**

You can choose either of the two objects to be the subject of the passive sentence:

- **The police** were given the information.

- **The information was given** to the police.

The passive voice - When should we use the passive?

- **1) When we want to change the focus of the sentence:** The Mona Lisa was painted by Leonardo da Vinci. (We are more interested in the painting than the artist in this sentence)
- **2) When who or what does the action is unknown or unimportant or obvious or 'people in general':**
 - He was arrested (obvious agent, the police).
 - My bike has been stolen (unknown agent).
 - The road is being repaired (unimportant agent).
 - The form can be obtained from the post office (people in general).
- **3) In factual or scientific writings:** The chemical is placed in a test tube and the data entered into the computer.
- **4) In formal writings instead of using someone/ people/ they (these can be used in speaking or informal writing):** The book will be finished next month.
- **5) In order to put the new information at the end of the sentence to improve style:** Three books are used regularly in the class. The books were written by dr. Bell. ('Dr. Bell wrote the books' sound clumsy)
- **6) When the subject is very long:** I was surprised by how well the students did in the test. (More natural than: 'how well the students did in the test surprised me')

The passive voice

- 1. It's a well-known fact that blue glass _____ in Bristol.
 - **A** is making **b** is made **c** has made **d** be make
 - 2. Help! My wallet _____ .
 - **A** is stolen **b** is stealing **c** has been stolen **d** has stealing
 - 3. Eri's electronic dictionary was _____ in China. It is the latest model.
 - **A** make **b** making **c** makes **d** made
 - 4. Some of the students in our class _____ given a new map of the city last week. It shows the skating rink and the cinema that we sometimes go to.
 - **A** is **b** are **c** was **d** were
 - 5. This year, more than ten million turkeys _____ in the United Kingdom on Christmas day.
 - **A** are going to be eating **b** are going to be eaten **c** are going to eaten **d** are going to eating
 - 6. This book _____ from recycled paper so it is good for the environment.
 - **A** was making **b** made **c** is made **d** is make
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- 1) B
 - 2) C
 - 3) D
 - 4) D
 - 5) B
 - 6) C

The passive voice

- 7) Our products _____ all over the world.
 - **A** are sell **b** been sold **c** is sold **d** are sold
 - 8) Last night, Alberto's bicycle was _____ from the garden outside his house.
 - **A** stolen **b** be stolen **c** stealing **d** being stealing
 - 9) A few days ago, Fernando's car broke down. But luckily it was fixed ___ a man at the garage in only two hours.
 - **A** from **b** by **c** with **d** at
 - 10) I can wear my new watch all the time. For example, it _____ in the shower or in a swimming pool.
 - **A** can wear **b** can worn **c** can be worn **d** can be wearing
 - 11) Please remember that cups of tea or coffee _____ brought into the classroom.
 - **A** must not **b** must not be **c** must not being **d** must not been
 - 12) The last question in the test was very difficult. It was only _____ correctly by John and Chris.
 - **A** answer **b** answering **c** answers **d** answered
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- 7) D
 - 8) A
 - 9) B
 - 10) C
 - 11) B
 - 12) D

Multiple choice - modals

- 13) The fire spread through the building very quickly, but fortunately everybody _____.
- **A** was able to escape **b** managed to escape **c** could escape **TWO OPTIONS ARE CORRECT**

- 14) 'I've lost one of my gloves.' 'You _____ it somewhere.'
- **A** must drop **b** must have dropped **c** must be dropping **d** must have been dropping

- 15) What was the problem? Why _____ leave early?
- **A** had you to **b** did you have to **c** must you **d** you had to

- 16) You missed a great party last night. You _____. Why didn't you?
- **A** should have come **b** had to come **c** must to come **d** have to come

- 13) A, B
- 14) B
- 15) B
- 16) A

Multiple choice

Passive forms

Choose the correct answer, A, B or C.

- 1 Sorry. Your clothes yet.
A didn't been ironed B haven't done iron C haven't been ironed
- 2 Film stars love
A been photographing B being photographed C being photograph
- 3 in the 1960s?
A Did the house build B Was the house built C Was built the house
- 4 What happened? hurt?
A Did he get B Did he been C Got he
- 5 The novel was
A by Charles Dickens written B written of Charles Dickens
C written by Charles Dickens
- 6 The experiment under strict medical supervision.
A we carried out B was carried out C was carrying out
- 7 Thanks for the medicine. before or after meals?
A Should it be taken B It should take C Should be taken it
- 8 This heater in a bathroom.
A can't to use it B not can be used C cannot be used
- 9 David
A a car was given by his uncle B to his uncle was given a car
C was given a car by his uncle
- 10 I'm not surprised your camera isn't working. It out in the rain!
A shouldn't have left B shouldn't have been left C shouldn't to be left

The passive voice

Answer key:

1. C
2. B
3. B
4. A
5. C
6. B
7. A
8. C
9. C
10. B