

# Voices of the Verb



**Active or**  
**Passive**  
**Voice?**



# Active and Passive Voices



# A sad story...

Last week I found a great apartment. The rent was reasonable. That's why I decided to throw a party the other night.

The next day I was thrown out of it!

Active or passive

*I threw a party the other night.* (active)

meaning: I did something.

*I was thrown out of it.* (passive)

meaning: Something was done to me.

The passive is formed with the verb *to be* (in the appropriate tense) + *past participle* (of the main verb)

✓The terrorist was arrested early this morning.

✓Toyota cars are made in Japan.

✓A new class representative will be chosen on Monday.

- These examples show that a passive sentence can be in whatever tense you like. The tense of the verb *to be* changes to give different tenses in the passive.

- ✓ The Present Simple Tense – AM, IS, ARE
- ✓ The Present Continuous Tense – Verb TO BE + ING
- ✓ The Present Perfect Tense – HAVE/HAS + Past Participle
- ✓ The Past Simple Tense – WAS, WERE

- ✓ The Past Continuous Tense – WAS/WERE + ING
- ✓ The Past Perfect Tense – HAD + Past Participle
- ✓ The Future Tense – WILL BE
- ✓ With modals – CAN BE, WOULD BE, SHOULD BE, MAY BE, MUST BE...

The passive is more common in written than spoken English. It sounds formal and impersonal, and for that reason it is often used in:

- ✓ reports of crimes or legal procedures – He was sentenced to two years in prison.
- ✓ newspaper reports – The match was postponed due to a heavy fog.



- ✓ scientific writing – Three millilitres of water are added to the mixture.
- ✓ announcements – Flight BA 302 to London is delayed by two hours.
- ✓ notices – Customers are requested not to smoke.

In everyday situations we use it when we do not know or care who performs the action. In other words, the passive is used when we are more interested in what happens to a thing or a person.

Nevertheless, it is not unusual to mention the ‘*actual doer*’ in a passive sentence. In that case we put them at the end of the sentence after the preposition *by*:

*“Great expectations” was written by Charles Dickens.*

*“Star wars” was directed by George Lucas.*

# Practice

1. Put the verbs in brackets into the correct passive form

- Shampoo is tested (test) on animals before it is sold (sell) in shops.
- This house was built (build) in the XIX century.

# Practice

1. Put the verbs in brackets into the correct passive form:
- Two missing children have been found (find) safe and well.
  - A new bridge has been constructed (construct) last year.

# Active → Passive (steps)

Example:

(active) The postman delivers the letters at 09.00.

Step 1 – identify the object of the active sentence and place it at the beginning of the passive sentence. (the letters)

# Active → Passive (steps)

Step 2 – identify the tense of the active verb and put the verb *to be* into the same tense. (are)

Step 3 – turn the main active verb into the past participle form. (delivered)

(passive) The letters are delivered at 09.00.

## Practice: Active → Passive

✓ The police arrested the suspect late last night.

**The suspect was arrested late the other night.**

✓ They found him after an intensive search.

**He was found after an intensive search.**



## Practice: Active → Passive

✓ Two detectives questioned him and charged him with murder.

**He was questioned and charged with murder by two detectives.**

✓ They will take him to court later today.

**He will be taken to court later.**

## Summary

- ✓ In an active sentence the subject always precedes the action (verb). **S + V + O**
- ✓ In a passive sentence the object becomes the subject, i.e. the one that is acted upon. **O + V + S**

## Summary

- ✓ The predicate (verb) consists of the **verb to be** and the **past participle** of the main verb.
- ✓ If necessary, you can use '**by**' to say who or what is responsible for the action.
- ✓ It is often used when we do not know or care who performs the action.

# Credits



Latin American  
Language School

**Teacher Wagner Junior**

**Voices of the Verbs – Part 2**

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