

Passive Grammar – the basics

Passive Grammar is...

...common in academic English because it helps to create formality, focus on the object and develop an impersonal stance.

Structure: **verb to be + past participle**

active

- Mrs Harris cooks our food
 Subject verb object

passive

- Our food is cooked by Mrs Harris
 Object passive verb subject (agent)

RULE: The main use of the passive is to say who / what was affected not who did the action (the doer)

Common Example

Hurricane kills 3,000 people

In a newspaper:

3,000 people are killed by Hurricane

RULE: focus of the passive sentence is on the object - in this case the object is more important than the cause

Passive Rules:

Explain why the passive has been used in these sentences

1. *My car was stolen last night – we don't know who stole it*
2. *Hamlet was written by Shakespeare -*
3. *All the computers are checked before they leave the factory -*
4. *The Prisoner is being taken to Jail*
5. *The problem is being dealt with in our accounts department -*
6. *Smoking is prohibited in the station -*

Passive Tense Structures

Fill in the passive column with the correct form

Tense	Active	Passive
Present simple	People speak English in China	English <u>is spoken</u> in China
Present Continuous	Decorators are painting our house	
Past simple	The police caught the thief	
Past continuous	They were taking the dogs for a walk	
Present Perfect simple	The police have arrested the murderer	
Past Perfect Simple	I had told her to arrive at 9.00	
Going to	They are going to sell the car	
Will	He will buy the car tomorrow	
Future Perfect	Scientists will have built a space station by 2050	
Modal present	The committee should solve the problem	
Modal perfect	They may have sold the house	

Tense Exercise – write the correct tense using the verb in brackets

- The election _____ (hold) next week.
- Antibiotics _____ (develop) in the 1930's.
- The new bridge _____ (open) by the Queen.
- More and more cars _____ (produce) every year.
- We _____ (invite) to Paul's wedding.
- Every car which left the ferry _____ (stop) and searched.
- The door _____ (leave) open on purpose.
- Everyone who applies _____ (give) an interview.
- Books _____ (return) within 3 weeks.
- He _____ (promote) 3 times before becoming a director.
- By 2050 the first space station _____ (build).

Passive Speaking

Have you ever been....

attacked by a dog / animal

hit by a teacher / parent / another person

interviewed for radio or TV

hit by a car

stopped by police

operated on

proposed to

told off by a teacher / parent / friend

arrested by the police

offered drugs / illegal products

taken to hospital by ambulance

given a prize

accused of doing something you didn't do

caught doing something illegal

Processes

What is manufactured in your country?

What are the main crops grown in your country?

What alcohol is produced in your country?

What is exported and imported in your country?

How is electricity generated in your country?

Passive Grammar – the basics **ANSWERS**

Passive Rules Answers

1. *My car was stolen last night*
We do not know who stole it
2. *Hamlet was written by Shakespeare*
The focus is on the book not Shakespeare
3. *All the computers are checked before they leave the factory*
It is not important to know who - that Pete and John do it
4. *The Prisoner is being taken to Jail*
It is known who takes the prisoner - the police
5. *The problem is being dealt with in our accounts department.*
Formality less personal and friendly
6. *Smoking is prohibited in the station*
Rules and regulations

Tense **Answers**

Tense	Active	Passive
Present simple	<i>People speak English in China</i>	English <u>is spoken</u> in China
Present Continuous	<i>Decorators are painting our house</i>	Our house is being painted by decorators
Past simple	<i>The police caught the thief</i>	The thief was caught by the police
Past continuous	<i>They were taking the dogs for a walk</i>	The dogs were being taken for a walk
Present Perfect simple	<i>The police have arrested the murderer</i>	The murderer has been arrested by the police
Past Perfect Simple	<i>I had told her to arrive at 9.00</i>	She had been told to arrive at 9:00
Going to	<i>They are going to sell the car</i>	The car is going to be sold
Will	<i>He will buy the car tomorrow</i>	The car will be bought tomorrow
Future Perfect	<i>Scientists will have built a space station by 2050</i>	The space station will have been built by 2050
Modal present	<i>The committee should solve the problem</i>	The problem should be solved by the committee
Modal perfect	<i>They may have sold the house</i>	The house may have been sold

Tense Exercise **ANSWERS**

1. *The election is being held next week*
2. *Antibiotics were developed in the 1930's*
3. *The new bridge is going to be opened by the Queen*
4. *More and more cars are sold every year*
5. *We have been invited to Paul's wedding*
6. *Every car which left the ferry was being stopped and searched*
7. *The door may have been left open on purpose.*
8. *Everyone who applies will be given an interview*
9. *Books must be returned within 3 weeks*
10. *He had been promoted 3 times before becoming a director*
11. *By 2050 the first space station will have been built*

N.B: more than one answer is possible