

## Passive Structures

### Grammar – passive (verb to be + p/p)

#### Present simple

**Active:** My mother washes my clothes

**Passive:** My clothes are washed by my mother

#### Present continuous

**Active:** My mother is washing my clothes

**Passive:** My clothes are being washed by my mother

#### Present perfect

**Active:** My mother has washed my clothes

**Passive:** My clothes have been washed by my mother

#### Past simple

**Active:** My mother washed my clothes

**Passive:** My clothes were washed by my mother

#### Past continuous

**Active:** My mother was washing my clothes

**Passive:** My clothes were being washed by my mother

#### Past perfect

**Active:** My mother had washed my clothes

**Passive:** My clothes had been washed by my mother

#### Future 'will'

**Active:** My mother will wash my clothes

**Passive:** My clothes will be washed by my mother

#### Future 'going to'

**Active:** My mother is going to wash my clothes

**Passive:** My clothes are going to be washed by my mother

#### Future continuous

**Active:** My mother will be washing my clothes

**Passive:** My clothes will be being washed by my mother

#### Future perfect

**Active:** My mother will have washed my clothes

**Passive:** My clothes will have been washed by my mother

#### Modal verbs

**Active:** My mother might wash my clothes

**Passive:** My clothes might be washed by my mother

**Active:** My mother can wash my clothes

**Passive:** My clothes can be washed by my mother

**Active:** My mother must wash my clothes

**Passive:** My clothes must be washed by my mother

## Rules

We use the active form to say what the subject does. For example:

- I speak English every day at work.
- I repaired the flat tire on the car.

We use the passive form to say what happens to people and things, to say what is done to them. For example:

- English is spoken here.
- The car is being repaired.

We use the passive form when we don't know who did the action. For example:

- The car was damaged while it was parked on the street.
- The shirts were made in Turkey.

We use the passive form when what was done is more important than who did it. For example:

- It was approved by Gerry last week.
- I was informed by the Human Resources Manager only two days ago

### Important points

If there are two objects in the active sentence, two passive sentences are possible.

- **Active:** They gave me 50 dollars to do it.
- **Passive:** I **was given** 50 dollars to do it / 50 dollars **was given** to me to do it.

Get is often used instead of be in informal spoken English.

- I **got offered** the promotion.
- The table **got damaged** in the fire.
- I **got asked** to present the award.

When we want to express the subject - it is usually preceded with 'by'.

- The painting **was done by** Picasso.

When we talk about a tool used by an agent, it can be preceded by 'with'.

- The painting **was done with** oils on canvas.

## **Passive Exercise 1**

(Intermediate level)

Change the sentences to passive voice.

1. One of the cleaners has found my purse.
2. The robber hit him on the head with a hammer.
3. The government has built a new road in this area.
4. The assistant handed me a note.
5. We elected John class representative.
6. Someone has taken my wallet.
7. Many people use bicycles as a means of transport.
8. They advised me to get a visa.
9. They were rebuilding the old road when I drove by.
10. The local council opened a new shopping centre.
11. They haven't decided anything yet.
12. The crowd was slowly filling the new stadium.
13. Someone has suggested that the shop should close.
14. Dad used a knife to open the window.
15. The waitress will bring you your drinks in a minute
16. Nobody ever heard anything of John again.
17. People asked me the way three times
18. Lots of people had parked their cars on the pavement.
19. The helpers have not packed the boxes yet.
20. They are still preparing the food.
21. They will launch the new ship next week.
22. Christopher Wren built the church in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.
23. Beckham scored the goal in the 35<sup>th</sup> minute.
24. We serve all main courses with vegetables and salad.
25. Someone pushed Harry over the railing.

Adapted from: [www.english-grammar.at](http://www.english-grammar.at)

## Passive Exercise 2

(Intermediate level)

Change the sentences to passive voice.

1. They introduced me to her husband
2. Someone sold this old hat to my wife.
3. They are pushing the car.
4. Someone broke into my office.
5. They were talking about you.
6. You ought to clean the desk.
7. The headmaster will contact you.
8. Nobody has given out the news yet.
9. Didn't she tell you the truth?
10. The thieves had stolen all the gold.
11. The students are using the computers right now.
12. They often mistreat the patients here.
13. Edison invented the gramophone.
14. Everybody admired your last book.
15. Someone is knocking at the door.
16. They might take the old man to the hospital.
17. They could have kicked her out of the restaurant.
18. We will have to give them more attention.
19. The cat ate the sandwich.
20. They told us that the water is clean.
21. Millions of fans will see the final game tomorrow.
22. They told us to leave the room.
23. You should review the lessons before the test.
24. The doctors have made the announcements over the loudspeakers.
25. The publishers are reading the book.

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## Answer Key Exercise 1

1. My purse has been found by one of the cleaners.
2. He was hit on the head with a hammer (by the robber).
3. A new road has been built in this area (by the government).
4. I was handed a note (by the assistant).
5. John was elected class representative.
6. My wallet has been taken.
7. Bicycles are (often, widely) used as a means of transport.
8. I was advised to get a visa.
9. The old road was being rebuilt when I drove by.
10. A new shopping centre was opened by the local council.
11. Nothing has been decided yet.
12. The new stadium was slowly being filled by the crowd.
13. It has been suggested that the shop should close.
14. A knife was used to open the window.
15. Your drinks will be brought in a minute.
16. Nothing was ever heard of John again.
17. I was asked the way three times.
18. Many cars had been parked on the pavement.
19. The boxes have not yet been packed yet.
20. The food is still being prepared.
21. The new ship will be launched next week.
22. The church was built by Christopher Wren in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.
23. The goal was scored by Beckham in the 35<sup>th</sup> minute.
24. All main courses are served with vegetables and salad.
25. Harry was pushed over the railing.

## Answer key Exercise 1

1. I was introduced to her husband.
2. This old had was sold to my wife
3. The car is being pushed.
4. My office was broken into.
5. You were being talked about.
6. The desk ought to be cleaned.
7. You will be contacted by the headmaster.
8. The news has not been given out yet.
9. Weren't you told the truth?
10. All the gold had been stolen by the thieves.
11. The computers are being used right now by the students.
12. Patients are often mistreated here.
13. The gramophone was invented by Edison.
14. Your last book was admired.
15. The door is being knocked at.
16. The old man might be taken to the hospital.
17. She could have been kicked out of the restaurant
18. They will have to be given more attention.
19. The sandwich was eaten by the cat.
20. We were told that the water is clean.
21. The final game will be seen by millions of fans tomorrow.
22. We were told to leave the room
23. The lessons should be reviewed before the test.
24. The announcements have been made by the doctors over the loudspeakers.
25. The book is being read by the publishers.