

## 6. Passive Voice



The Passive is formed by using the appropriate tense of the verb **to be** + **past participle**.

	Active Voice	Passive Voice
Present Simple	They <b>repair</b> cars.	Cars <b>are repaired</b> .
Present Continuous	They <b>are repairing</b> the car.	The car <b>is being repaired</b> .
Past Simple	They <b>repaired</b> the car.	The car <b>was repaired</b> .
Past Continuous	They <b>were repairing</b> the car.	The car <b>was being repaired</b> .
Future Simple	They <b>will repair</b> the car.	The car <b>will be repaired</b> .
Present Perfect	They <b>have repaired</b> the car.	The car <b>has been repaired</b> .
Past Perfect	They <b>had repaired</b> the car.	The car <b>had been repaired</b> .
Future Perfect	They <b>will have repaired</b> the car.	The car <b>will have been repaired</b> .
Present Infinitive	They will have <b>to repair</b> the car.	The car will have <b>to be repaired</b> .
Perfect Infinitive	She ought <b>to have repaired</b> the car.	The car ought <b>to have been repaired</b> .
Gerund	He likes people <b>admiring</b> his new car.	He likes his new car <b>being admired</b> .
Perfect Gerund	<b>Having repaired</b> the car, ...	The car, <b>having been repaired</b> , ...
Modals + be + p.p.	You <b>must repair</b> this car.	This car <b>must be repaired</b> .

The passive is used :

1. when the agent (the person who does the action) is unknown, unimportant or obvious from the context.

*My car **was stolen** yesterday. (unknown agent)*

*The road repairs **were completed** last week. (unimportant agent)*

*The kidnappers **have been arrested**. (by the police - obvious agent)*

2. to make statements more polite or formal.

*My new suit **has been burnt**. (It's more polite than saying "You've burnt my new suit".)*

3. when the action is more important than the agent - as in news reports, formal notices, instructions, processes, headlines, advertisements etc.

*Taking pictures **is not allowed**. (written notice)*

*The local bank **was robbed** this morning. (news report)*

*Bread **is baked** in an oven for about 45 minutes. (process)*

4. to put emphasis on the agent.

*The Tower of London was built by **William the Conqueror**.*



**Note :** We use the Passive only with transitive verbs (verbs which take an object).

They built **that castle** in 1600. That castle was built in 1600.

In colloquial English **get** can be used instead of **be** to express something happening by accident. She **got** sunburnt last week. (more usual than "She **was** sunburnt last week.")

### 114 Put the verbs in brackets into the correct passive form.

There is an old castle in Norwich which 1) *is believed* .....  
 (believe) to 2) ..... (haunt). It 3) .....  
 (call) North Castle and it 4) ..... (say) that ghosts  
 can 5) ..... (see) there at night. The castle  
 6) ..... (build) 400 years ago and 7) .....  
 (own) by two old ladies who 8) ..... (believe) to be  
 witches. One day, long ago, they both disappeared and they  
 9) ..... (never/see) again. In 1985 the  
 castle 10) ..... (buy) by a businessman and  
 11) ..... (convert) into a luxurious hotel. The  
 castle 12) ..... (visit) by quite a few guests every year and special groups 13) .....  
 ..... (organise) to watch for ghosts. It has been a long time since any ghosts 14) ..... (see),  
 but one night a trick 15) ..... (play) on some visitors by a local couple, who dressed  
 up as the two "witches". They 16) ..... (see) by a guest, who said she  
 17) ..... (frighten) almost to death. The couple apologised the next day, and 18) .....  
 ..... (tell) never to visit the castle again, certainly not in the middle of the night dressed up as witches.



### 115 Rewrite the newspaper headlines as complete sentences.

1. RARE BIRD FOUND IN  
REMOTE COUNTRYSIDE

2. QUEEN WELCOMED TO  
AUSTRALIA YESTERDAY

3. NEW JERSEY TO BE HIT BY  
BAD WEATHER TOMORROW

4. FIVE PEOPLE INJURED  
IN CAR ACCIDENT

5. EXPERIMENTS BEING CARRIED  
OUT ON MOON ROCKS

6. POP CONCERT CALLED OFF  
YESTERDAY BECAUSE OF RAIN

1. .... *A rare bird has been found in the remote countryside.* .....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....
5. ....
6. ....

### 116 Put the verbs in brackets into the correct passive form.

Professor Higgins, who 1) *was awarded* ..... (award) a major science prize last month, 2) .....  
 (invite) to take part in a conference which 3) ..... (hold) in London last week. He 4) .....  
 (meet) at the airport by a driver who, unfortunately, 5) ..... (give) the name of the wrong hotel  
 to take the professor to. A large reception 6) ..... (organise) for the professor, and at least 200  
 eminent scientists 7) ..... (invite) to meet him that evening. The poor professor, however,  
 8) ..... (leave) at a small hotel in a rather bad area, and when he asked to speak to the  
 Head of the Conference Committee he 9) ..... (tell) to try somewhere else because he  
 10) ..... (not/hear of) there. Luckily, later that evening, the driver 11) ..... (send)  
 to the hotel where the reception 12) ..... (hold), and when he 13) ..... (ask)  
 what he had done with the professor, everyone realised that a mistake 14) ..... (make).  
 The professor says that if he 15) ..... (ever/send) another invitation to a conference, he hopes it  
 16) ..... (organise) more efficiently.



**117** Fill in the Passive in the appropriate tense, then justify its use.

unknown agent, unimportant/obvious agent, polite statement, emphasis on the agent, action more important than the agent, process, news report

1. ....polite statement.....



(animals/shouldn't/feed)  
..Animals shouldn't be fed..

2. ....



(Hamlet/write/Shakespeare)

3. ....



(just/tell/the bad news)

4. ....



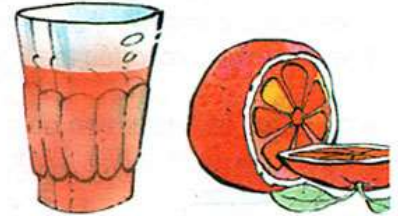
(dinner/serve)

5. ....



(the building/destroy/fire)

6. ....



(juice/make/from orange)

7. ....



(the room/not tidy/yet)

8. ....



(a bomb/place/station yesterday)

9. ....



(the jewellery/steal)

**118** Fill in the correct passive form.

A new wing 1) *is being built*. (build). The walls 2) ..... (paint). Some trees 3) ..... (plant).  
The roof 4) ..... (repair). The school 5) ..... (change) from a girls' school to a co-ed school.  
A library 6) ..... (open) next week.  
Computers 7) ..... (deliver) at the moment. New desks 8) ..... (already/buy).

