

PASSIVE FORM – B1

Main theme addressed	In this lesson, you will learn about the passive form in English.
Key Goals	<p>Here is an outline of what you will learn today:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do we conjugate verbs in the passive form? 2. When do we use the passive form? 3. How do we conjugate the passive form in questions?

1. How do we conjugate verbs in the passive form?

The passive voice is formed by **a form of the verb TO BE + past participle of the main verb**. The verb TO BE can be conjugated in various tenses.

In order to say who or what performs the action while using the passive voice, we can use the preposition **by**.

For example:

Mike **reviewed** the book.

The book **was reviewed by** Mike.

An **action verb** is either transitive or intransitive. A **transitive verb** means that it can hook directly to a noun or pronoun (the direct object). An **intransitive verb** means that it cannot hook directly to a **noun** or **pronoun**.

Examples:

Subject	Active	Object	Passive	
Mike	writes	the book	The book is written	by Mike
Mike	wrote	the book	The book was written	by Mike
Mike	will write	the book	The book will be written	by Mike
Mike	has written	the book	The book has been written	by Mike
Mike	had written	the book	The book had been written	by Mike
Mike	will have written	the book	The book will have been written	by Mike
Mike	is writing	the book	The book is <u>being</u> written	by Mike
Mike	was writing	the book	The book was <u>being</u> written	by Mike
Mike	will be writing	the book	Doesn't <u>exist</u>	
Mike	has been writing	the book	Doesn't <u>exist</u>	
Mike	had been writing	the book	Doesn't <u>exist</u>	
Mike	will have been writing	the book	Doesn't <u>exist</u>	

The passive voice is often used in formal texts. Using the active voice will make your writing clearer and easier to read.

Passive	Active
A great deal of emotion is conveyed by one look.	One look conveys a great deal of emotion.
Our culture is defined by co-operation.	Cooperation defines our culture.
The two leaders have signed the contract.	The contract has been signed by the two leaders.

When we know who performed the action and if this is important, it is better to switch to the active voice instead.

Passive	Active
"Hallelujah" was written by the Leonard Cohen.	Leonard Cohen wrote "Hallelujah".
The movie Batman was directed by Christopher Nolan.	Christopher Nolan directed the movie Batman.
Our house was built by my father.	My father built our house.

Exercise:

Change the sentences to passive voice.

1. Shakespeare wrote Romeo and Juliet.

“Romeo and Juliet” _____ by Shakespeare.

2. Millions of people have read Harry Potter.

Harry Potter _____ by millions of people.

3. They sent the documents to the wrong address.

The documents _____ to the wrong address.

4. This restaurant serves excellent food.

Excellent food _____ in this restaurant.

Exercise:

Complete the following sentences with the passive form of the verb in brackets.

Example: A summary (give) to everyone yesterday. => A summary was given to everyone yesterday.

1. The escaped prisoner _____ (see) at the airport yesterday.
2. The injured man _____ (take) to hospital after the crash.
3. The apartment _____ (clean) before our arrival.
4. The photographs _____ (publish) in the local newspaper.
5. Food and medicine _____ (send) to Africa.
6. The accident _____ (cause) by a driver using a mobile phone.

2. When do we use passive form?

In the active voice, the subject of the sentence performs the action. In the passive voice, the subject of the sentence **is acted upon**.

The passive voice is used in the following occasions:

1. When the person who did the action is **unknown**

Example:

The king was killed in the 13th century.

2. When the person who performs the action is obvious, irrelevant, or “people in general”

Examples:

Donald Trump **was elected** president.

Finnish **is considered** one of the most difficult languages in the world.

3. When the **person who performs the action is** less important than the object of the action and you wish to **emphasise the receiver rather than the doer**

We can include “**by...** (the doer)” if we know who did the action and want to mention it.

NOTE! We still want to keep the **primary** focus of attention on the **object** of the action.

Example:

The Big Ben **was designed** by Augustus Pugin.

3. How to form the passive voice for every tense in English

Tense	Active / Passive	When to use it?
Simple Present	The IT department tests the products.	General procedures; general thoughts and opinions
	The products are tested .	
Simple past	A contractor renovated our kitchen last month.	Actions are completed at a certain time in the past.
	Our kitchen was renovated last month.	
Simple future	Everyone will exchange gifts at Christmas. The judge is going to give the verdict tomorrow.	Actions to be completed in the future
	Gifts will be exchanged at Christmas. The verdict is going to be given tomorrow.	
Present continuous	Teachers are using the new book in their classrooms.	Actions currently in progress
	The new book is being used in classrooms.	
Past continuous	I told my manager that my colleague was stealing my ideas.	Actions in progress at some point in the past
	I told my manager that my ideas were being stolen .	

Tense	Active / Passive	When to use it?
Present perfect	Somebody has eaten the whole pizza.	Actions completed at an unspecified time in the past.
	The whole pizza has been eaten .	
Past perfect	I discovered that someone had stolen my shoes.	An action that happened before another action in the past.
	I discovered that that my shoes had been stolen .	
Future perfect	The store will have delivered your product by tomorrow.	An action that will happen before some date in the future
	Your product will have been delivered by tomorrow.	

Note that the verb “to be” is in singular or plural depending on the new subject of the sentence:

Scientists **are using** the new method to cure diabetes.

(scientists = plural, so we use “are”)

The new method **is being used** to cure diabetes.

(the new method = singular, so we use “is”)

My colleague **was stealing** my ideas.

(my colleague = singular, so we use “was”)

My ideas **were being stolen**.

(ideas = plural, so we use “were”)

Exercise:

Write the passive form of the following sentences.

1. Julia rescued the cat.

_____.

3. The students handed in the reports.

_____.

4. Maria crashed into the car.

_____.

4. Alex learned the poem.

_____.

5. Steven has forgotten the book.

_____.

6. How do we form questions in Passive voice?

Questions in passive are formed with the structure **to be + past participle**.

1. Questions without questions words, passive form (Simple Present)

Be verb	Subject	Past participle	Rest of the sentence	Yes/No	Subject	Auxiliary (+ n't)
Is	the book	written	in 1919?	Yes, No, No,	it it it	is. is not. isn't.
Are	oranges	grown	in Spain?	Yes, No, No,	they they they	are. are not. aren't.

2. Questions with questions words, passive form (Simple Present)

Question word	Be verb	Subject	past participle	Rest of the sentence	Answer
When	was	the book	written?		The book was written in 1915.
Why	are	oranges	grown	in Spain?	Oranges are grown in Spain because it is warm.

3. Questions without question words, passive form (Simple Past)

Be verb	Subject	past participle	Rest of the sentence	Yes/No	Subject	Auxiliary (+ n't)
Was	the movie	shown	in class?	Yes, No, No,	it it it	was. was not. wasn't.
Were	the children	taken	to the hospital?	Yes, No, No,	they they they	were. were not. weren't.

4. Questions with question words, passive form (Simple Past)

Question word	Be verb	Subject	past participle	Rest of the sentence	Answer
Where	was	this movie	filmed?		The movie was filmed in Australia.

7. Other tenses

Some more examples in other tenses:

Tense	Auxiliary	Subject	Verb
Present Perfect	Has	the flat	been renovated?
Past Perfect	Had	the flat	been renovated?
Will future	Will	the flat	be renovated?
Going to future	Is	the flat	going to be renovated?
Future Perfect	Will	the flat	have been renovated?
Conditional	Would	the flat	be renovated?
Conditional Perfect	Would	the flat	have been renovated?

Here are two progressive forms:

Tense	Auxiliary	Subject	Verb
Present Progressive	Is	the flat	being renovated?
Past Progressive	Was	the flat	being renovated?

Exercise:

Transform the questions into questions in passive form.

1. Did the police catch the thieves?

_____?

2. Do the students always write tests at class?

_____?

3. Will he accept my apology?

_____?

4. Do people find many species of deer in the USA?

_____?

5. Did they build the Eiffel tower in 1988?

_____?

6. Will the computers replace the workers?

_____?

Learn more:

<https://www.espressoenglish.net/passive-voice-in-english/>

<https://www.coursehero.com/>