

## Passive 1 (is done / was done)

**A** Study this example:



This house **was built** in 1981.

'This house **was built**' is *passive*.

Compare active and passive:

Somebody **built** this house in 1981. (*active*)  
*subject* this house *object*

This house **was built** in 1981. (*passive*)  
*subject*

When we use an *active* verb, we say *what the subject does*:

- My grandfather was a builder. **He built** this house in 1981.
- It's a big company. **It employs** two hundred people.

When we use a *passive* verb, we say *what happens to the subject*:

- 'How old is this house?' '**It was built** in 1981.'
- Two hundred people are employed** by the company.

**B** When we use the passive, who or what causes the action is often unknown or unimportant:

- A lot of money **was stolen** in the robbery. (somebody stole it, but we don't know who)
- Is** this room **cleaned** every day? (does somebody clean it? – it's not important who)

If we want to say who does or what causes the action, we use **by**:

- This house was built **by my grandfather**.
- Two hundred people are employed **by the company**.

**C** The passive is **be (is/was etc.) + past participle (done/cleaned/seen etc.)**:

**(be) done (be) cleaned (be) damaged (be) built (be) seen** etc.

The *past participle* often ends in **-ed** (cleaned/damaged etc.), but many important verbs are *irregular* (**built/done/stolen** etc.). See Appendix 1.

Compare active and passive, *present simple* and *past simple*:

*Present simple*

*active:* **clean(s) / see(s)** etc.

Somebody **cleans** this room every day.

*passive:* **am/is/are + cleaned/seen** etc.

This room **is cleaned** every day.

- Many accidents **are caused** by careless driving.
- I'm not invited** to parties very often.
- How **is** this word **pronounced**?

*Past simple*

*active:* **cleaned/saw** etc.

Somebody **cleaned** this room yesterday.

*passive:* **was/were + cleaned/seen** etc.

This room **was cleaned** yesterday.

- We **were woken** up by a loud noise during the night.
- 'Did you go to the party?' 'No, I **wasn't invited**.'
- How much money **was stolen** in the robbery?

# Exercises

## 42.1 Complete the sentences. Use these verbs in the correct form, present or past:

cause	damage	find	hold	injure	invite
make	overtake	own	send	show	surround

- Many accidents are caused by careless driving.
- Cheese ..... from milk.
- The roof of the building ..... in a storm a few days ago.
- A cinema is a place where films .....
- You ..... to the party. Why didn't you go?
- This plant is very rare. It ..... in very few places.
- Although we were driving fast, we ..... by a lot of other cars.
- In the US, elections for president ..... every four years.
- There was an accident last night, but fortunately nobody .....
- You can't see the house from the road. It ..... by trees.
- I never received the letter. It ..... to the wrong address.
- The company I work for ..... by a much larger company.

## 42.2 Write questions using the passive. Some are present and some are past.

- Ask about glass. (how / make?) How is glass made?
- Ask about television. (when / invent?) When .....
- Ask about mountains. (how / form?) .....
- Ask about DNA. (when / discover?) .....
- Ask about silver. (what / use for?) .....

## 42.3 Put the verb into the correct form, present or past, active or passive.

- Two hundred people are employed (employ) by the company.
  - The company employs (employ) 200 people.
- Water ..... (cover) most of the earth's surface.
  - How much of the earth's surface ..... (cover) by water?
- While I was on holiday, my camera ..... (steal) from my hotel room.
  - While I was on holiday, my camera ..... (disappear) from my hotel room.
- Robert's parents ..... (die) when he was very young.
  - Robert and his sister ..... (bring up) by their grandparents.
- The boat hit a rock and ..... (sink) quickly.
  - Fortunately everybody ..... (rescue).
- Bill ..... (fire) from his job. He wasn't very good at it.
  - Sue ..... (resign) from her job because she didn't enjoy it any more.
- It can be noisy living here, but it ..... (not / bother) me.
  - It can be noisy living here, but I ..... (not / bother) by it.
- Maria had an accident. She ..... (knock) off her bike.
  - Maria had an accident. She ..... (fall) off her bike.
- I haven't seen these flowers before. What ..... (they / call)?
  - I haven't seen these flowers before. What ..... (you / call) them?

## 42.4 Instead of using somebody, they, people etc., write a passive sentence.

- Somebody cleans the room every day. The room is cleaned every day
- They cancelled all flights because of fog. All .....
- Somebody accused me of stealing money. .... money.
- How do you use this word? How ..... used?
- The price includes all taxes. All ..... in the price.
- People warned us not to go out alone. We .....
- We don't use this office any more. This .....
- They invited five hundred people to the wedding. Five hundred .....

## Passive 2 (be done / been done / being done)

### A

#### Infinitive

active: (to) **do/clean/see** etc.

Somebody **will clean** this room later.

passive: (to) **be + done/cleaned/seen** etc.

This room **will be cleaned** later.

- The situation is serious. Something must **be done** before it's too late.
- A mystery is something that can't **be explained**.
- The music was very loud and could **be heard** from a long way away.
- A new supermarket is going **to be built** next year.
- Please go away. I want **to be left** alone.

### B

#### Perfect infinitive

active: (to) **have + done/cleaned/seen** etc.

Somebody **should have cleaned** the room.

passive: (to) **have been + done/cleaned/seen** etc.

The room **should have been cleaned**.

- I haven't received the letter yet. It might **have been sent** to the wrong address.
- If you had locked the car, it wouldn't **have been stolen**.
- There were some problems at first, but they seem **to have been solved**.

### C

#### Present perfect

active: **have/has + done** etc.

The room looks nice. Somebody **has cleaned** it.

passive: **have/has been + done** etc.

The room looks nice. **It has been cleaned**.

- Have you heard? The trip **has been cancelled**.
- Have** you ever **been bitten** by a dog?
- 'Are you going to the party?' 'No, I **haven't been invited**.'

#### Past perfect

active: **had + done** etc.

The room looked nice. Somebody **had cleaned** it.

passive: **had been + done** etc.

The room looked nice. **It had been cleaned**.

- The vegetables didn't taste good. They **had been cooked** too long.
- The car was three years old, but **hadn't been used** very much.

### D

#### Present continuous

active: **am/is/are + (do)ing**

Somebody **is cleaning** the room at the moment.

passive: **am/is/are + being (done)**

The room **is being cleaned** at the moment.

- There's somebody walking behind us. I think we **are being followed**.
- A new bridge **is being built** across the river. It will be finished next year.

#### Past continuous

active: **was/were + (do)ing**

Somebody **was cleaning** the room when I arrived.

passive: **was/were + being (done)**

The room **was being cleaned** when I arrived.

- There was somebody walking behind us. I think we **were being followed**.

**43.1 Complete these sentences. Use the following verbs in the passive:**  
arrest carry cause delay ~~do~~ forget keep knock know make repair send

Sometimes you need **have** (might have, would have etc.).

- 1 The situation is serious. Something must be done before it's too late.
- 2 I haven't received the letter yet. It might have been sent to the wrong address.
- 3 A decision will not ..... until the next meeting.
- 4 These documents are important. They should always ..... in a safe place.
- 5 This road is in bad condition. It should ..... a long time ago.
- 6 The injured man couldn't walk and had to .....
- 7 If you hadn't shouted at the policeman, you wouldn't .....
- 8 I'm not sure what time I'll arrive tomorrow. I may .....
- 9 It's not certain how the fire started. It might ..... by an electrical fault.
- 10 A new school is being built. The old one is going to ..... down.
- 11 The election is next Sunday. The full results will ..... on Tuesday.
- 12 Last week they weren't speaking to one another. Now they're happy again. The problem seems to .....

**43.2 Make sentences from the words in brackets. Sometimes the verb is active, sometimes passive.**

- 1 There's somebody behind us. (We / follow) We're being followed.
- 2 This door is a different colour, isn't it? (you / paint?) Have you painted it?
- 3 My bike has disappeared. (It / steal!) It .....
- 4 My umbrella has disappeared. (Somebody / take) Somebody .....
- 5 A neighbour of mine disappeared six months ago.  
(He / not / see / since then) He .....
- 6 I wonder how Jessica is these days.  
(I / not / see / for ages) I .....
- 7 A friend of mine was stung by a bee recently.  
(you / ever / sting / bee?) ..... you .....
- 8 The bridge was damaged recently.  
(It / repair / at the moment) It .....
- 9 Tom's car was stolen recently.  
(It / not / find / yet) .....
- 10 I went into the room and saw that the table and chairs were not in the same place.  
(The furniture / move) The .....

**43.3 Instead of using 'somebody', 'they' etc., write a passive sentence.**

- 1 Somebody has cleaned the room. The room has been cleaned.
- 2 They are building a new road around the city.  
A ..... around the city.
- 3 They have built two new hotels near the airport.  
Two ..... near the airport.
- 4 When I last visited, they were building some new houses here.  
When I last visited, some .....
- 5 The meeting is now on 15 April. They have changed the date.  
The date of .....
- 6 I didn't know that somebody was recording our conversation.  
I didn't know that our .....
- 7 Is anyone doing anything about the problem?  
..... anything ..... the problem?
- 8 The windows were very dirty. Nobody had cleaned them for ages.  
The windows were very dirty. They .....



## Exercises

## 44.1 Complete the sentences using the correct form of the verb.

- I tried to contact Tom.  
I called his office but I was told (tell) that he was in a meeting.
- Amy retired from her job recently.  
She ..... (give) a present by her colleagues.
- I didn't know there was a meeting yesterday.  
I ..... (not / tell) about it.
- Sarah's salary is very low.  
I don't understand why she ..... (pay) so little.
- You will need to use this machine.  
Have you ..... (show) how it works?
- I had an interview for a job recently. It wasn't easy.  
I ..... (ask) some questions that were very hard for me to answer.
- They didn't tell us much about the project.  
We ..... (not / give) enough information.
- I was surprised to get the job I applied for.  
I didn't expect ..... (offer) it.

44.2 Complete the sentences using **being** + the following verbs (in the correct form):

bite    give    invite    ~~keep~~    knock down    stick    treat

- Steve hates being kept waiting.
- We went to the wedding without .....
- I like giving presents and I also like ..... them.
- It's a busy road and I don't like crossing it. I'm afraid of .....
- How do you avoid ..... by mosquitoes?
- I'm an adult. I don't like ..... like a child.
- You can't do anything about ..... in a traffic jam.

44.3 Complete the sentences using **get** or **got** + the following verbs (in the correct form):

ask    break    ~~hurt~~    pay    steal    sting    stop    use

- There was a fight, but nobody got hurt .....
- Alex ..... by a bee while he was sitting in the garden.
- These tennis courts don't ..... very often. Not many people want to play here.
- I used to have a bike, but it ..... a few months ago.
- Rachel works hard, but she doesn't ..... very much.
- Please pack these things very carefully. I don't want anything to .....
- People often want to know what my job is. I ..... that question a lot.
- Last night I ..... by the police as I was driving home. One of the lights on my car wasn't working.

## 44.4 Complete the sentences.

- I've been offered ..... the job, but I don't think I'll accept it.
- I don't ..... get invited to many parties.
- Which year ..... you born in?
- I haven't been ..... any information yet.
- I didn't know the way, so I got .....
- He doesn't like ..... interrupted when he's speaking.
- How did the window ..... broken? What happened?
- She's a voluntary worker. She ..... get paid.
- I ..... born in a small town in the north of the country.
- We had to do what we did. We ..... given any choice.