

The passive

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

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

The passive is used:

- **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)*
- **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.")*
- **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)*
- **to put emphasis on the agent.**
*The Tower of London was built by **William the Conqueror**.*

7 Write the sentences in the passive.

- 1 An expert is restoring the antique car. *The antique car is being restored by an expert.*
- 2 Steven Spielberg has directed a lot of successful films.
- 3 They saw two men running out of the bank.
- 4 A number of reporters will meet the professor at the airport.
- 5 A famous designer is going to redecorate the President's house.
- 6 The Romans founded Bath in the first century AD.
- 7 A loud noise woke Mary up.
- 8 He made her work overtime.
- 9 Van Gogh painted *Sunflowers*.
- 10 Astronauts are exploring space.

8 Write the sentences in the passive. Omit the agent where it can be omitted.

- 1 People chop down a lot of trees every year. *A lot of trees are chopped down every year. (omitted)*
- 2 Homer wrote the *Iliad*.
- 3 The government will introduce new measures against crime.
- 4 Someone has burgled Ann's house.
- 5 She offered me a cup of tea.
- 6 They check passports at Passport Control.
- 7 A million people visit the cathedral every year.
- 8 Someone has stolen Mike's bicycle.
- 9 The mayor will open the exhibition.
- 10 Somebody saw Roger leave.

10 Turn the following sentences into the passive.

- 1 Scientists might soon discover a cure for cancer. *A cure for cancer might soon be discovered.*
- 2 Someone should help the old woman across the street.
- 3 The police might have arrested the escaped prisoner.
- 4 They should have provided more food at the reception.
- 5 They should build more bike lanes.
- 6 She could have written the answers more clearly.