

## THE PASSIVE

**Form** : We form the passive voice with be + past participle. We use be in the same tense that we would use the verb in the active sentence.

Tense	Active	Passive
Present Simple	writes	is written
Present Continuous	is writing	is being written
Past Simple	wrote	was written
Past Continuous	was writing	was being written
Present Perfect	has written	has been written
Past Perfect	had written	had been written
will	will write	will be written
be going to	is going to write	is going to be written
Modal verb	can write	can be written

E.g. They bought a cottage. (active) // A cottage was bought (passive)  
Someone could have broken it. (active) // It could have been broken. (passive)

When we change an active sentence into a passive sentence, the object of the active sentence becomes the subject of the passive sentence.

E.g. : **Politicians** (subject) discussed **the issue**. (object)

**The issue** was discussed by **politicians**.

**Use:** We use the passive voice:

- To emphasize the action (the verb) rather than who or what (the agent) carried out the action.
- To put the most important idea at the beginning of the sentence.

E.g. : The tutor has punished some students.

**Some students have been punished by the tutor.**

When we want to emphasize what a person or thing does, we usually use an active verb. When we want to emphasize what happens to or what is done to a person or thing, we usually use a passive verb.

E.g. : My father's company published this book.

(= It is important to say who published the book)

**Thousands of books are published every year.**

(= It is not important to say who published the book)

Be careful : Some verbs do not have a passive form. They include intransitive verbs (action verbs which do not take an object), such as die, sleep, swim ... etc

## The Passive + by

In some passive sentences , we need to include the object of the sentence (the agent).  
We do this by adding by + agent.

E.g. : Tim Berners-Lee invented the internet.

**The internet was invented by Tim Berners-Lee.**

We include by + agent if the object of the sentence is interesting or important.  
We only omit by + agent:

- When the agent is not very important or obvious.
- When the agent is unknown.
- If we do not want to name the agent.

E.g. : **The course has been cancelled.** (= we don't know who cancelled it.)

**In the UK, dangerous weapons are banned in schools.**

(= The agent – the government and school teachers – is obvious)

But : **The new school will be opened by Johnny Depp.**

(= The fact that Johnny Depp is opening the new school is important or interesting.)

## ***Verbs with two objects***

Many sentences only have one object (the direct object).

E.g. : We heard a lecture.

I bought a book.

- Some sentences, however, have two objects : indirect object and a direct object. The sentences always include a verb which needs an indirect object, for example: ask, buy, give, lend, offer, pay, promise, refuse, show, sell, send, teach, tell ...

E.g. : I bought **the teacher** (= indirect object) **a present** . (= direct object)

She gave **us** (= indirect object) **a test** .(= direct object)

- To form a passive sentence, we use the object of the active sentence as the subject. When the active sentence has two objects, we can choose either of them as the new subject. However, it is much more common to choose the indirect object as the subject.

E.g. : They gave **Daniel** (= indirect object) **the poetry prize**. (= direct object)

**Daniel was given the poetry prize.**

or

**The poetry prize was given to Daniel.**

- When we make the direct object the new subject of the sentence, we use a preposition before the indirect object. We usually use to or less frequently for.

E.g. : **This book was lent to me.**

**The computer was bought for him.**