Advanced uses of the passive voice
Goals

- Review how to form the passive voice
- Learn when to use passive voice in complex cases
- Practise writing and speaking in the passive voice
The **passive voice** places more emphasis on who or what receives the action than who or what does the action.

So you **will be taught** how to use it today.
Preview and warm-up

- In this lesson you are going to review how to use the passive voice and learn more about how to use it in complex tenses.

Our product will be completed soon.
Reviewing the passive voice

- Below are some examples of **active** and **passive sentences** in the **present simple** and the **past simple**.
- Remember, the **passive voice** is formed using the verb *be* in the appropriate tense and the **past participle** of the main verb.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Active</th>
<th>Passive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People speak English in Australia.</td>
<td>English is spoken in Australia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elena took the minutes at today’s meeting.</td>
<td>The minutes of today’s meeting were taken by Elena.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People eat turkey at Christmas in the UK.</td>
<td>Turkey is eaten at Christmas in the UK.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Here are some more examples of **passive sentences** in different tenses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present continuous</th>
<th>Past simple</th>
<th>Present perfect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The problem is being handled by the customer service team.</strong></td>
<td>Our suggestions were implemented.</td>
<td>A meeting has been arranged for next Wednesday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>My car is being fixed.</strong></td>
<td>The assignment was sent out to the freelancers.</td>
<td>Houses have been built on the land we used to play on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lunch is being served in the canteen</strong></td>
<td>Linda was given a promotion.</td>
<td>The project has finally been completed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Here are some more **passive structures** in other tenses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Past continuous</th>
<th>Past perfect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A dog was being chased by a large cat.</td>
<td>He had been warned about his behaviour before.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A man was being held hostage while the police negotiated.</td>
<td>She was angry because she had just been fired from the job she loved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dinner was being served when the plane hit turbulence.</td>
<td>They had been touted as the next big thing but they never made it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The preposition *by*

We can use the **passive voice** with or without *by*.

- We use *by* when we want to say who **does the action**.
- We do not use *by* when we **do not know/can’t say** who **performs** an action or when it is **obvious** who or what **performs** an action.

Look at the examples below and discuss why *by* was or wasn’t used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>&quot;by&quot; Used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A man was arrested.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The clothes are made by children who work very long hours.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My car has been stolen.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The court was told that the accused was seen in the area.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The contract was not signed by my boss.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The notes were written by Joshua.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Transform the sentences from active to passive

1. The police arrested the man. → The man was arrested (by the police).

2. People in Britain send 350 million letters every year. → People in Britain are sent 350 million letters every year.

3. Nora has conducted the research for this report. → The research for this report has been conducted by Nora.

4. A co-worker is reviewing Nora’s report. → Nora’s report is being reviewed by a co-worker.

5. They had already eaten all the cookies when I arrived. → All the cookies had already been eaten by them when I arrived.
Discuss why you did or didn’t use *by* in the sentences on the previous page.
Alice Hancock ____________ (give) her first piano by her parents when she was 6. They thought it ____________ (be) a big gift for a young girl but they ____________ (convince) by her piano teacher, who ____________ (tell) them that their daughter was a genius. Unfortunately, the piano ____________ (not touch) by Alice after the first week of having it. However, Alice’s brother Mike ____________ (turn out) to be a prodigy, and he ____________ (play) the piano every day until he ____________ (enter) for a musical competition by Alice’s teacher. He ____________ (win), and from then on the piano belonged to him.
The passive voice with the future simple

Here is how we construct and use the **passive voice** with the **future simple**:  

- *will be* + *past participle*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Active</th>
<th>Passive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We will finish the project by noon.</td>
<td>The project will be finished by noon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She will give a speech on time management.</td>
<td>A speech will be given on time management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An expert will demonstrate how to use the new product.</td>
<td>How to use the new product will be demonstrated by an expert.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Here is how we construct and use the **passive voice** with the **future perfect**:

- *will have been* + *past participle*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Active</th>
<th>Passive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We will have implemented all the changes by the deadline.</td>
<td>The changes will all have been implemented by the deadline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I hope the real estate agent will have sold our house by next month.</td>
<td>I hope our house will have been sold by next month.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We will have released the product by next month.</td>
<td>The product will have been released by next month.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One of the most **common verbs** which is used in the **passive voice** is *to be born*.

It is often used in the **past tense**, but can be used in **others**.

---

**To be born**

| I was born in 1980. |
| One baby is born every 40 seconds in the UK. |
| Seven babies will have been born by the time my shift finishes tonight! |
| Your baby will be born soon. |
| Over 100 babies have been born in this hospital so far this year. |
Verbs that can’t be used in the passive voice

- **Intransitive verbs** (those without an object) cannot be used in the passive voice.
- Some **stative verbs** can also not be used in the passive. Look at the examples below.

- He has arrived.
- John has a sister and a brother.
- Did you cycle here?
- I will sleep well tonight.
- This bag belongs to Helen.
Fill in the gaps

Fill in the gaps with one of the verbs below in the future simple or the future perfect.

1. The meeting ____________ next Tuesday.
2. If the court convicts you, you ____________ to prison.
3. Our product ____________ in Europe and Asia.
4. The report ____________ by tomorrow morning.
5. The staff ____________ about the new management in this afternoon’s meeting.

send  finish  hold  tell  sell
I am found at one of the poles but not the other.

My habitat is being destroyed. People say I will become extinct if we don’t act soon.
Who/what am I?

Using the previous page as a model, choose three more animals or people that you can describe in three sentences. Try to use passive sentences as much as possible.
To be born

Answer the questions below with your classmates.

1. When and where were you born?

2. Are any babies going to be born in your family soon?

3. Where were your parents and grandparents born?
As you probably remember, we often use the **passive voice** in **formal writing**. Look at the examples of sentences below.

- The results of the experiment have not yet been examined.
- The theory of evolution was first formulated by Charles Darwin.
- Staff were observed during their working hours and their movements were measured.
The passive with *get*

- There is another more informal side to the passive voice and that is when it is used with *get*. This is used in spoken language.
- Look at the examples below of a normal passive construction and the passive with *get*. The structure is: subject + *get* + past participle.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passive with <em>be</em></th>
<th>Passive with <em>get</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My findings were confirmed by an expert in the field.</td>
<td>My findings got confirmed by an expert in the field.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My absence was approved by my boss.</td>
<td>My absence got approved by my boss.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Get or be

Fill in the gaps with the passive voice using *get* or *be* depending on which you think is more appropriate.

1. Did you hear that Dave _____________ (arrest) last night?
2. A man aged 24 _____________ (arrest) last night on suspicion of burglary.
3. John Parker _____________ (fire) for stealing money from the firm.
4. John _____________ (fire) for taking money!
What projects are you working on at the moment? What needs to be done by the end of this month? Share your response with the class using the passive voice.
True or false?

Fill in the gaps with passive verbs.

1. The first canned beer ____________ (sell) in 1933.
2. The first European Championship football tournament ____________ (hold) in 1960.
3. Up to the year 2000, almost 2 million pairs of Levi’s jeans ____________ (sell).
4. The first car ____________ (invent) by an American.
5. George Washington ____________ (elect) President of the United States in 1789.

Now say if you think the sentences are true or not.
Write answers to these questions using the passive voice.

Who are the best electronics made by?

Who are your favourite clothes made by?

Where are the worst cars manufactured?
Reflect on the goals

Go back to the second slide of the lesson and check if you have achieved all the goals of the lesson.

Yes

No
Reflect on this lesson

Think about everything you have seen in this lesson. What were the most difficult activities or words? The easiest?

If you have time, go over the most difficult slides again.
Exercise p. 9
2. 350 million letters are sent in Britain every year.
3. The research for this report was conducted by Nora.
4. Nora's report is being reviewed by a co-worker.
5. The cookies had already been eaten when I arrived.

Exercise p. 16
1. will be held
2. will be sent
3. will be sold
4. will have been finished
5. will be told

Exercise p. 17
1. played, was entered, won
2. told/told, wasn’t touched, turned out
3. were given, was, were convinced, had

Exercise p. 22
1. was sold (T)
2. was held, (T)
3. had been sold (F – 2 billion pairs)
4. was invented (F – a German)
5. was elected (T)

Exercise p. 24
1. got arrested
2. got fired
3. was arrested, 2. was arrested, 3. was
4. got fired
5. was fired

Exercise p. 28
1. every year;
2. 350 million letters are sent in Britain
Homework
Complete the table with the past participle of the verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>give</th>
<th>given</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>go</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>see</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>become</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suspend</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fell</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Complete the sentences so they are true for you.

1. A great present I was given...
2. A meal I have been cooked by someone was ...
3. My favourite book was written by...
4. My favourite film was directed by...
5. Something I am annoyed by...
Homework answer key

Gone/been, had, seen, eaten, become, suspended, felt, fallen

Exercise p. 30
About this material

This material is proudly provided by

and can be used by anyone for free and for any purpose.

lingoda

Who are we?

Why learn English online?

What kinds of English classes do we offer?

Who are our English teachers?

How do our English certificates work?

We also have a language blog!