

## SECTION 7 passives

### grammar summary

When A does something to B, there are often two ways to talk about it: 'active' and 'passive'.

- We use **active** verbs if we want A to be the **subject**.  
*Mrs Harris **cooks** our meals. Andrew **broke** the window.*
- We use **passive** verbs if we want B to be the **subject**.  
*Our meals **are cooked** by Mrs Harris. The window **was broken** by Andrew.*

We make **passive verbs** with *be* (*am, are, is* etc) + **past participle** (*cooked, broken* etc).

**Passive** verbs have the **same tenses** (simple present, present progressive, present perfect etc) as **active** verbs.

For a list of active and passive tenses, see page 300.

'I'm afraid,  
Mr Klesmerod,  
that your blood  
type has been  
discontinued.'



### Do you know? (Answers at the bottom of the page)

- Which of these is used to boil water?**  
A a fridge    B a sink    C a kettle    D a hot water bottle
- Which US President was killed in a theatre?**  
A Lincoln    B Kennedy    C Eisenhower    D Nixon
- Which game is played with a racket?**  
A golf    B cricket    C football    D tennis
- If you are being served, where are you?**  
A in a shop    B in a church    C in the sea    D in hospital
- The Olympic Games have never been held in:**  
A Melbourne    B Tokyo    C London    D Chicago
- Which of these metals was discovered by Marie Curie?**  
A uranium    B radium    C gold    D platinum
- Which of these was not written by Shakespeare?**  
A Hamlet    B The Sound of Music    C Othello    D Julius Caesar
- Which country was governed by the Pharaohs?**  
A Sweden    B China    C Egypt    D Japan



passives: introduction *English is spoken in Australia.*

When A does something to B, there are often two ways to talk about it: 'active' and 'passive'.

We use **active** verbs if we want A to be the **subject**.

We use **passive** verbs if we want B to be the **subject**.

We make **passive** verbs with **be** (am, are, is etc) + **past participle** (cooked, seen etc).



ACTIVE			PASSIVE		
A		B	B		(by A)
Mrs Harris	cooks	our meals.	Our meals	are cooked	by Mrs Harris.
Andrew	broke	the window.	The window	was broken	by Andrew.
Somebody	saw	her in Belfast.	She	was seen	in Belfast.
The government	will close	the hospital next year.	The hospital	will be closed	next year.

**Passive** verbs have the **same tenses** (simple present, present progressive, present perfect etc) as **active** verbs.

For a list of active and passive tenses, see page 300.

Note the use of **by** in passives, to say **who** or **what** does the action.

*Our meals are cooked by Mrs Harris. (NOT ...from Mrs Harris.)*

1 Which picture goes with which sentence?

▶ The policeman helped the old lady. **A**

- 1 The policeman was helped by the old lady. ....  
2 The car hit a tree. ....  
3 The car was hit by a tree. ....

- 4 Annie loves all dogs. ....  
5 Annie is loved by all dogs. ....  
6 The Queen photographed the tourists. ....  
7 The Queen was photographed by the tourists. ....



2 Circle the correct answer.

- 1 English *speaks / spoken / is spoken* in Australia.  
2 I *studied / was studied* French for three years at school.  
3 We *spent / was spent* too much money on holiday.  
4 This window *broke / was broken* by your little boy.  
5 Her clothes *made / are made* in Paris.  
6 This book *written / was written* by my brother.  
7 The new university *will open / will opened / will be opened* by the Prime Minister.  
8 Ann *was driving / was driven* much too fast, and she *stopped / was stopped* by the police.  
9 This house *built / was built* in 1800.  
10 Everybody *had / was had / was have* a good time at the party.

simple present passive *We are woken by the birds.*

+	I am woken	you are woken	he/she/it is woken etc
?	am I woken?	are you woken?	is he/she/it woken? etc
-	I am not woken	you are not woken	he/she/it is not woken etc
For contractions (I'm, isn't etc), see pages 2, 301.			

We use the **simple present passive** like the simple present active, for things that are **always true**, and things that happen **all the time, repeatedly, often, sometimes, never** etc (see page 17).

*I am paid every two weeks. Is Jeremy liked by the other children? Stamps aren't sold here.*

→ For spelling rules for adding -ed to verbs, see page 46; for irregular past participles, see page 299.

1 Complete the sentences with **am/are/is**.

- ▶ A lot of paper **is** made from wood.  
1 What ..... this called in English?  
2 Jane ..... paid on the first of every month.  
3 I ..... often sent to the Singapore office.  
4 ..... any classes taught on Wednesdays?  
5 More chocolate ..... eaten in the US than in any other country.  
6 Not very much ..... known about Shakespeare's childhood.  
7 We ..... woken by the birds every morning.  
8 ..... you seen by the same doctor every week?

2 Put simple present passive verbs into these sentences.

- ▶ A lot of olive oil **is used** in Greek cooking. (use)  
1 Arabic ..... from right to left. (write)  
2 Those programmes ..... by millions of people every week. (watch)  
3 Stamps ..... in most newsagents in Britain. (sell)  
4 The police say that nothing ..... about the child's family. (know)  
5 In English, 'ough' ..... in a lot of different ways. (pronounce)  
6 Spanish ..... in Peru. (speak)  
7 Cricket ..... by two teams of eleven players. (play)  
8 Our windows ..... once a month. (clean)

3 Make simple present negatives and questions.

- ▶ 'Those computers **are not made** in America.' (not make)  
'Where **are they made?**' 'In China.'  
1 'My name ..... with a Y.' (not spell)  
'How ..... 'L, E, S, L, I, E.'  
2 'That kind of bird ..... around here, usually.' (not see)  
'Where ..... 'In warmer countries.'  
3 'Where ..... like were.' (not pronounce)  
'How ..... 'Like wear.'  
4 'Diamonds ..... in Scotland.' (not find)  
'Where ..... 'In South Africa, for example.'  
5 'My sister ..... very well.' (pay)  
'How much ..... 'I don't remember.'



future passive *Tomorrow your bicycle will be stolen.*

+	I <b>will be</b> woken	you <b>will be</b> woken	he/she/it <b>will be</b> woken etc
?	<b>will I be</b> woken?	<b>will you be</b> woken?	<b>will he/she/it be</b> woken? etc
-	I <b>will not be</b> woken	you <b>will not be</b> woken	he/she/it <b>will not be</b> woken etc
For contractions (I'll, won't etc), see page 301.			

We use the **future passive** like the future active (see page 39), to say things that we **think, guess or know** about the future, or to ask questions about the future.

One day all the work **will be done** by machines.      Where **will the match be played**?

1 Make future passive sentences with the verbs from the box.

clean   close ✓   finish   open   send   speak

- The motorway *will be closed* for three days.
- 1 The museum ..... by the Queen.
- 2 One day English ..... everywhere.
- 3 This job ..... in a few days.
- 4 Your room ..... while you're out.
- 5 Your tickets ..... to you next week.

2 Make future passive negatives and questions.

- 'The football match *won't be played* on Saturday.' (play)
- 'When *will it be played*?' 'On Sunday.'
- 1 'The visitors ..... to the hotel by bus.' (take)
- 'How ..... there?' 'By taxi.'
- 2 'The new library ..... in the Central Square.' (build)
- 'Where .....?' 'Behind the Police Station.'
- 3 'English ..... at the conference.' (speak)
- 'What language .....?' 'Chinese.'

3 Make five future passive sentences from the table.

Next year	your	clean / cook /	by	a small man in a raincoat /
Tomorrow	bed / bicycle /	do / eat / make /		a black cat / two old ladies /
Next week	breakfast / food /	send to Canada /		a beautiful woman /
Tonight	clothes / dinner /	steal / wash /		people from another world /
One day	glasses / house /	take away		the President / a big dog /
In 20 years	room / work			your old friend Peter /
				a machine

*Tomorrow your bicycle will be stolen by your old friend Peter.*

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



simple past passive *I was stopped by a policeman.*

+	I <b>was</b> woken	you <b>were</b> woken	he/she/it <b>was</b> woken etc
?	<b>was I</b> woken?	<b>were you</b> woken?	<b>was he/she/it</b> woken? etc
-	I <b>was not</b> woken	you <b>were not</b> woken	he/she/it <b>was not</b> woken etc
For contractions (wasn't etc), see page 301.			

We use the **simple past passive** like the simple past active, for **complete finished actions and events** (see page 47).

This table **was made** by my grandfather.      Was the letter **signed**?      We **weren't met** at the door.

1 Complete the sentences with was/were.

- 1 The fire ..... seen in Renton, a kilometre away.
- 2 Most of the matches ..... won by Indian teams.
- 3 These keys ..... found in the changing room yesterday – are they yours?
- 4 We couldn't find the station, but we ..... helped by a very kind woman.
- 5 I ..... stopped by a policeman in Green Road this morning.
- 6 Yesterday a man ..... caught trying to burn down the Town Hall.

2 Put simple past passive verbs into these sentences.

- 1 Our passports ..... by a tall woman in a uniform. (take)
- 2 These books ..... in the classroom on Monday. (leave)
- 3 I don't think this room ..... yesterday. (clean)
- 4 We ..... at the airport by a driver from the university. (meet)
- 5 Nobody ..... what was happening. (tell)
- 6 He ..... away to school when he was twelve. (send)

3 Make simple past passive negatives and questions.

- 'We *weren't paid* when we finished the work.' (not pay)
- 'When *were you paid*?' 'Two months later.'
- 1 'My father ..... in England.' (not educate)
- 'Where .....?' 'In Germany.'
- 2 'The letters ..... on Tuesday.' (not post)
- 'When .....?' 'On Thursday.'
- 3 'This ..... in butter.' (not cook)
- 'How .....?' 'In margarine.'
- 4 'My suit ..... in England.' (not make)
- 'Where .....?' 'In Hong Kong.'
- 5 'The restaurant bill ..... in cash.' (not pay)
- 'How .....?' 'With a credit card.'

We use a past passive structure – **to be born** – to give somebody's date or place of birth.

I **was born** in 1964. (NOT I born in 1964. NOT I am born in 1964.)      My sisters **were born** in Egypt.

4 Write a sentence about your date and place of birth.

I .....



present progressive passive *It's being cleaned.*

+	I am being watched	you are being watched	he/she/it is being watched etc
?	am I being watched?	are you being watched?	is he/she/it being watched? etc
-	I am not being watched	you are not being watched	he/she/it is not being watched etc
For contractions (I'm, isn't etc), see pages 2 and 301.			

We use the **present progressive passive** like the present progressive active, for things that are happening **now** (see page 24), or for things that are **planned for the future** (see page 38).

'Where's the carpet?' 'It's **being cleaned**.'      When are you **being seen** by the doctor?

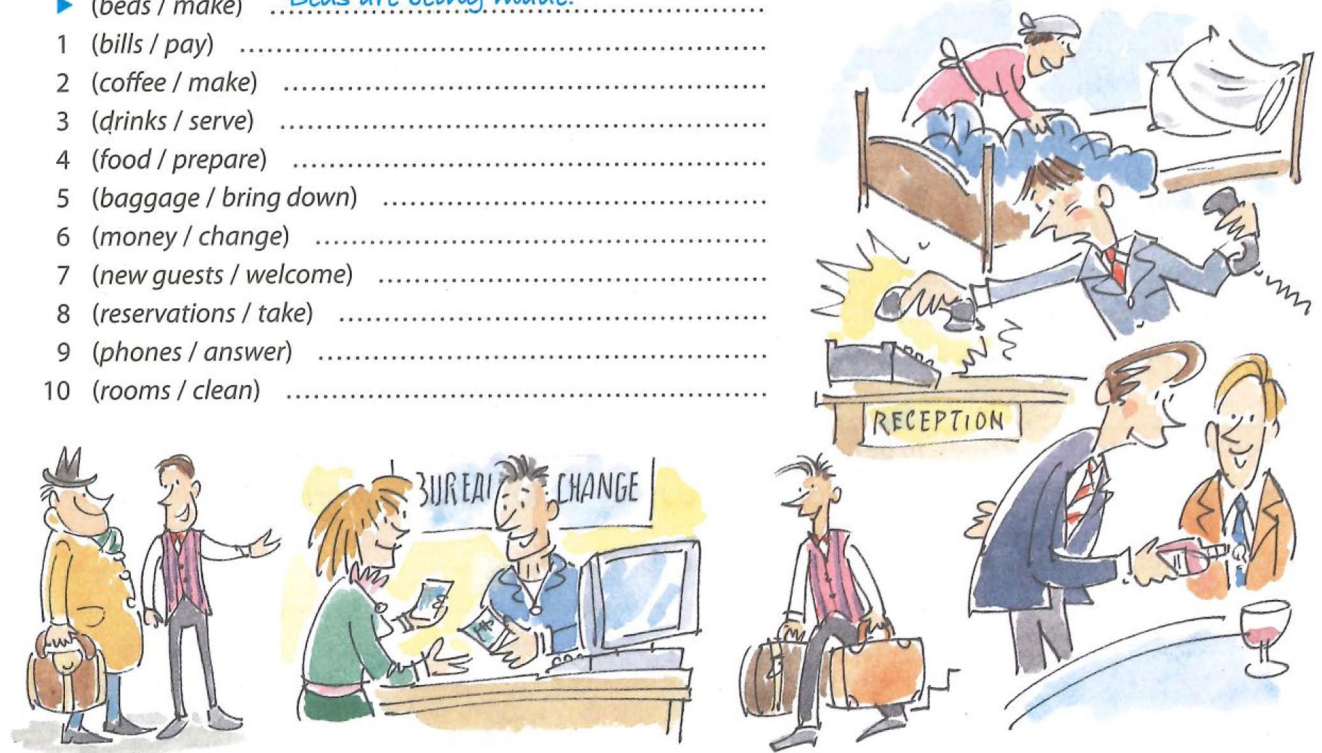
1 Questions and answers. Use the words in the box to complete answers to the questions. Use the **present progressive passive**.

the grass / cut ✓    he / watch    I / send    it / clean    it / paint    it / rebuild    my hair / cut  
she / interview    the engine / repair    my watch / repair    we / follow

- ▶ 'Can we play on the football pitch?' 'No, **the grass is being cut**.'
- 1 'Can't you wear your blue suit tonight?' 'No, .....'
- 2 'Did Alice get that new job?' 'Not yet – ..... today.'
- 3 'What time is it?' 'Sorry, I don't know: .....'
- 4 'Why the big smile?' ..... to Hawaii for a week.'
- 5 I usually read a magazine while .....
- 6 I think ..... by a police car.
- 7 'Where's your car?' 'At the garage. ....'
- 8 The school is closed this year. ....
- 9 George doesn't know that ..... by the police.
- 10 I can't use my office this week because .....

2 Imagine you are in a busy hotel at midday. Make sentences to say what is being done.

- ▶ (beds / make) **Beds are being made.**
- 1 (bills / pay) .....
- 2 (coffee / make) .....
- 3 (drinks / serve) .....
- 4 (food / prepare) .....
- 5 (baggage / bring down) .....
- 6 (money / change) .....
- 7 (new guests / welcome) .....
- 8 (reservations / take) .....
- 9 (phones / answer) .....
- 10 (rooms / clean) .....



present perfect passive *The house has been sold.*

+	I have been seen	you have been seen	he/she/it has been seen etc
?	have I been seen?	have you been seen?	has he/she/it been seen? etc
-	I have not been seen	you have not been seen	he/she/it has not been seen etc
For contractions (I've etc), see page 301.			

We use the **present perfect passive** like the present perfect active (see pages 60-65), to talk about past actions and events which are **important now** – for example, when we give people news.

The house on the corner **has been sold**.      We **haven't been invited** to Anna's party.

1 News: put the verbs into the present perfect passive.

- ▶ A new university **has been opened** ..... in Kew today by the Prince of Wales. (open)
- 1 Lord Retlaw ..... for drunk driving. (arrest)
- 2 An old painting from a school in Wales ..... for \$250,000 by an American museum. (buy)
- 3 An 18-year-old soldier ..... in an accident in Devon. (kill)
- 4 The two lost children ..... alive and well in a London park. (find)
- 5 An unknown actor ..... to star in the new film of 'Macbeth'. (choose)
- 6 The old hospital in the town centre ..... (close)
- 7 'What's the problem?' 'My bicycle ..... ' (steal)
- 8 I ..... to write something for the local newspaper. (ask)
- 9 All the papers for next week's meeting ..... (lose)
- 10 Everybody in the class ..... to Stacey's party. (invite)

2 'It's never been done.' Make a sentence for each picture.

cut

▶ **It's never been cut.**

ride

1 .....

wear

2 .....

open

3 .....

use

4 .....

play

5 .....



passives: more practice

1 Tenses. Put in simple present, simple past or future passive verbs.

- 'Frankenstein' was written by Mary Shelley. (write)  
► The repairs will be finished before next Tuesday. (finish)
- Butter ..... from milk. (make)
  - Last night two men ..... in a fight in a nightclub. (kill)
  - One day all our work ..... by machines. (do)
  - English ..... as a second language by millions of people. (speak)
  - This computer ..... in Japan. (make)
  - All the footballers ..... by a doctor before the match last Sunday. (examine)
  - This room ..... every day. (clean)
  - You ..... of the test results as soon as possible. (inform)
  - The new road ..... in July next year. (open)
  - Diamonds ..... in several countries in Africa. (find)

2 Present progressive passive. Imagine that you are in a busy hotel at one o'clock.

All the hotel staff are on strike (they have stopped work) because they want more money.  
Write sentences about six things that are not being done. Some useful words:

baggage bills coffee drinks food money  
new guests reservations rooms telephones

Beds are not being made.

3 GRAMMAR AND VOCABULARY: travelling by air. Make sure you know the words in the box.  
Use a dictionary if necessary. Then imagine you are in an airport, and write six or more sentences about what is being done.

SUBJECTS: arriving passengers baggage ✓ boarding passes cars  
departures passports reservations tickets  
VERBS: announce check make meet park print sell x-ray ✓



Baggage is being x-rayed.

4 Tenses. Put in present perfect passive or present progressive passive verbs.

- 'Is the Army Museum still in Green Street?' 'No, it has been closed.' (close)  
1 Don't look now, but I think we ..... (follow)  
2 Hello, police? I'd like to report a theft. My handbag ..... (steal)  
3 'Why did you take the bus?' 'My car ..... ' (repair)  
4 I think someone's been in my room – some books ..... (move)  
5 'There's nobody here.' 'No, all the students ..... home.' (send)  
6 'When ..... you ..... ' (interview)  
7 A group of suspected terrorists ..... by the police. (arrest)  
8 Another group of suspected terrorists ....., but they ..... (not arrest, watch)  
9 The hospital will be closed for two years, while it ..... (rebuild)  
10 James ..... to join the local football team. (ask)

5 Grammar in a text. Put in simple present active or passive verbs.



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Gorillas (► find) are found in several countries in Central Africa. They are about 1.6 metres tall, and they (1 cover) ..... with black or brown hair. Gorillas' lives (2 spend) ..... in groups. Each group has five to ten gorillas in it. The gorillas in a group (3 walk) ..... about 0.5 to 1.0 km per day, looking for food. They (4 not eat) ..... all the leaves in one part of the forest before moving on; some leaves (5 leave) ..... on the trees and plants. At night gorillas (6 sleep) ..... in nests; these nests (7 make) ..... of branches and leaves. The number of gorillas living in Africa today (8 not know) ..... but it is certain that this number is getting smaller. Why? Because in the countries where the gorillas (9 live) ..... more and more trees (10 cut down) ..... every year.

6 Internet exercise. Use a search engine (e.g. Google) to find short simple sentences with the following verbs. Write the sentences.

- "are made" .....  
"is spoken" .....  
"will be spent" .....  
"are being built" .....  
"have been seen" .....  
"were given" .....  
"were sent" .....  
"was arrested" .....



## passives: revision test

### 1 Circle the correct passive or active verb form.

- ▶ This book ~~written~~ was written by my uncle.
- 1 Derek *posted* / *was posted* his letter to the university today.
- 2 We did a lot of work for the school, but we *didn't pay* / *weren't paid*.
- 3 My friend Douglas *speaks* / *is spoken* seven languages.
- 4 The letter H *doesn't pronounce* / *isn't pronounced* in French.
- 5 A new hospital *will build* / *will be built* in the town centre.
- 6 You can't come in here – the room *is cleaning* / *is being cleaned*.
- 7 We *have invited* / *have been invited* to John's party tonight.
- 8 This sauce *makes* / *is made* with oil and vinegar.
- 9 French *speaks* / *is spoken* in Belgium.
- 10 John *broke* / *is broken* his leg last week.

### 2 Correct (✓) or not (x)?

- ▶ English is spoken in New Zealand. .... ✓
- ▶ I am born in Manchester. .... x
- 1 I was studied German for three years. ....
- 2 Emma invited to a party by her boss. ....
- 3 How is written your name? ....
- 4 'Where's your coat?' 'It's being cleaned.' ....
- 5 Our car has been stolen. ....
- 6 When is that window broken? ....
- 7 This book was written from my father. ....
- 8 I was taken to the opera by a friend of mine. ....
- 9 The new road will finished in July. ....
- 10 Our house was built in 1850. ....

### 3 Put in the correct passive tenses.

- ▶ 'The Birds' was directed ..... by Alfred Hitchcock. (*direct*)
- ▶ You will be paid ..... next week. (*pay*)
- 1 'Is the library still downstairs?' 'No, it ..... ' (*move*)
- 2 A new hospital ..... here next April. (*open*)
- 3 Somebody has been in my handbag. Some money ..... (*take*)
- 4 'Where's your black sweater?' 'It ..... ' (*wash*)
- 5 You ..... your examination results before the weekend. (*tell*)
- 6 'My car ..... ' 'Well, tell the police.' (*steal*)
- 7 This phone ..... in China. (*make*)
- 8 Spanish ..... in most of South America. (*speak*)
- 9 The windows ..... nearly every week. (*clean*)
- 10 I ..... to help you. What can I do? (*ask*)
- 11 There was a fight at the football match on Saturday, and one man ..... (*kill*)
- 12 Do you think all translation ..... by computers one day? (*do*)
- 13 'When ..... the match ..... ?' 'Tomorrow.' (*play*)
- 14 Three computers ..... from the school since Christmas. (*steal*)
- 15 The factory closed suddenly last week, and all the workers ..... away. (*send*)
- 16 This kind of cheese ..... from goats' milk. (*make*)
- 17 Alice ..... by a car the other day, and her leg ..... (*hit; break*)
- 18 Your letter ..... now – it will be ready in five minutes. (*translate*)
- 19 It says in today's paper that gold ..... in Scotland. (*find*)
- 20 'Have you done those letters?' 'Not yet. They ..... by five o'clock.' (*finish*)