

The passive

Lesson code: 13GQ-53I8-3T4T

INTERMEDIATE +

1 Presentation

Compare **active** and **passive** structures below.

Active: I **posted** the letter on Monday.

Passive: The letter **was posted** on Monday.

In the **active** sentence the *subject* (I) causes an action (posted the letter). In the **passive** sentence, the cause of the action is unknown or unimportant - we only say what happens *to* the subject (the letter).

The **passive** is formed with the verb **be (is/are/was/were etc.) + past participle (e.g. posted)**

For a list of irregular past participle forms, go to <https://www.linguahouse.com/r/2CF> or use your mobile device to read the code below:



If we want to say *who* or *what* causes the action in a passive sentence, we use **by**:

The letter **was posted by** her father.

He **was hit by** a motorbike.

If the verb in a passive sentence has two objects, we can begin with the second object or use **to**:

Active: The company gave me a new phone.

Passive: I **was given** a new phone. / A new phone **was given to me**.

We sometimes use **get** instead of **be**:

He nearly **got run** over by a car.

My phone **got stolen** yesterday.

Get is used mainly in informal or spoken English to talk about things that happen or change unexpectedly. We cannot say, for example, *she gets liked by everyone*.

Dialogue

A: His car **was sold** yesterday.

B: Really? Who bought it?

A: I don't know, but he **got paid** a lot of money for it.



2 Verbs in the passive

Complete the sentences using one of these verbs in the correct form:

clean hide hurt invite make teach write

- Bread _____ from flour and water.
- I didn't see you at the party because I _____ .
- The office _____ by the janitor every morning.
- Nobody knows when the book _____ .
- John _____ French at school when he was a child.
- Did you hear about the accident this morning? Fortunately, only two people _____ .
- The burglar didn't find Janet's jewellery box because it _____ under her bed.

3 Active or passive?

Complete the sentences with the verbs in the correct form (active or passive):

- Tom's parents died when he was a child, so he _____ (bring up) by his grandparents.
- I liked your old Facebook profile picture. Why _____ (you/change/it)?
- My new photos _____ (take) when I was on holiday in Spain.
- I can't get in the house. The door _____ (lock)!
- The shop _____ (close) every day at 5pm.
- My wallet _____ (steal) while I was at the bar. I think it was that man with the beard.
- Somebody _____ (steal) my wallet while I was at the bar. I'm never going back there again!
- Alan _____ (drive) everywhere. He loves his new car.
- The president _____ (drive) everywhere. He has his own private chauffeur.

4 Questions with the passive

Write questions using the passive.

When / the television / invent? *When was the television invented?*

- When / the first website / build?
- When / the telephone / invent?
- How often / the Olympics / hold?
- When / the first car / make?
- When / America / discover?
- Which leader / show / on Indian banknotes?

Now try to guess the answers to the questions or work with a partner and ask/answer the questions. Compare your answers to the correct answers on the next page. How close were you?



1. The first website was built in **1991**.
2. The telephone was invented in **1876**.
3. The Olympics are held **every 4 years**.
4. The first car was made in **1886**.
5. America was discovered in **1492**.
6. **Gandhi** is shown on Indian banknotes.

5 Passive - mixed tenses and modal verbs

Transform the sentences below into the passive voice. In some sentences you can use 'get' as well as 'be'.

1. Almost everybody uses a computer these days.
Computers
2. A loud noise woke me up this morning.
I
3. Somebody must tell him about the problem immediately!
He
4. Nobody can complete this task in only one hour.
This task
5. Many people have lost their jobs during this economic crisis.
Many jobs
6. When did somebody write this letter?
When was
7. Do you think they will discover a cure for cancer one day?
Do you think a cure for cancer
8. They didn't advertise the job offer on the Internet.
The job offer
9. My grandparents built this house over 60 years ago.
This house
10. Nobody has seen her since last month.
She
11. All the hotel staff are treating us really well.
We
12. Has somebody found Jack's phone yet?
Has Jack's

