

The Passive Voice

What is the passive voice?

It is a way to say who does or receives an action, in any tense.

- Mr Smith ~~was~~ presented to the Emergency Department on the 4th April.

Common error: Using the passive when we should use the active.

- Mr Smith prescribed painkillers during his hospitalisation.

Common error: Using the active when we should use the passive.

Remember: Every time we say a sentence we choose:

- tense
- active/passive
- subject + verb agreement

Mr Smith presented yesterday.

Purposes of the passive voice:

Purpose	Example
to focus on the action and not the doer of the action	That bridge <u>was built</u> ten years ago. Dinner <u>was cooked</u> an hour ago!
we don't know who did something	My bike <u>was stolen</u> last night.
when an authority does the action	Smoking <u>is prohibited</u> in this area. - the owners of the place Smoking <u>is prohibited</u> on public transport. - government
when you want to hide who does something	A mistake <u>was made</u> .

Including the subject:

The **subject** is called '**the agent**' in the passive and we include it with '**by**'.

Example: The windows were broken **by** two boys from the neighbourhood.

The verb 'to be'

It's very important to understand the verb 'be' when we use the passive because it changes in different tenses:

present	is , am, are
past	was, were
past participle	been
present participle	being

Golden rules for passive:

- 1) Always use **be + past participle**
- 2) You can use the passive in all **tenses** (though it is strange in some aspects)
- 3) The verb 'be' changes in different tenses
- 4) The **past participle** does not change in different tenses
- 5) We introduce the subject with '**by**' (we call the subject 'the agent')
- 6) The verb is important! Different verbs have different relationships with **objects**

The Passive in Different Tenses

Tense	Form	Example
present simple	am / is / are + past participle	My brother hits me a lot. I am hit a lot by my brother.
present continuous	active: be + verb + ing	My mum is cooking dinner.

	passive: is/are/am + being + past participle	Dinner is being cooked by my mum.
past simple	was /were + past participle	A motorbike hit me yesterday afternoon. I was hit by a motorbike yesterday afternoon.
past continuous	active: was/were + verb + ing passive: was/were + being + past participle	An estate agent was showing me around a house when I felt sick and had to leave. I was being shown around a house by an estate agent when I felt sick and had to leave.
present perfect	active: has/have + past participle passive: has/have + been + past participle	Paul has ridden that horse many times. That horse has been ridden many times (by Paul).
present perfect continuous	active: has/have + been + verb + ing Only use the active!	I have been cooking dinner in a hot kitchen.
past perfect	active: had + past participle passive: had + been + past participle	Paul had closed the window before he left. The window had been closed by Paul before he left.
past perfect continuous	active: had + been + past participle Only use the active!	Before he left for New York, John had been working as a chef.
When we combine continuous and perfect tenses with the passive, we put the tense first and the passive second:		

Present continuous:

Mum is cooking dinner.

Dinner is being cooked by Mum.

be + verb + ing + be + past participle

Past Continuous

The doctor was attending to Mr Smith when he began having a seizure.

Mr Smith was being attended to by the doctor when he began having a seizure.

Present Perfect

Paul has ridden that horse many times.

has/have + been + past participle

Past Perfect

had + been + past participle

Exercise 1

Use the correct form of the passive to make passive response:

1. My homework was really difficult. Thank god for my brother!
2. I am training for the Olympics, with the help of my trainer, John Adams.
3. My brother is cleaning the windows. So they can't be fixed right now.
4. The alarm went off **when** we were in the museum with the guide!

Exercise 2

Use verbs in the boxes below to complete the paragraphs. Choose:

- subject + verb
- tense
- active/passive

get waste challenging keep prepare take have to

I for this exam for a long time. It is! Iawake at night by it! It involves a lot of different aspects of mathematics and I know that I willbe really focused in order to the result I need. It will a lot of concentration to make sure I don't a single second in the exam!

monitor have (2) hit operate observe keep realise bring
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A man to our ER department **by** an ambulance two months ago. He by a truck and he a range of injuries. We he severe internal bleeding, so we Hefor two weeks. Heand round the clock.

affect	experience	worsen	diagnose	anticipate	use
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Mrs Johnson with alopecia areata three years ago. **Since** then sheintermittent balding. Various parts of the body Both topical creams and steroid injectionssince her diagnosis, with some success. At this stage, there is no indication that the conditionand therefore, progression to alopecia totalis

occur	stimulate	assume	refer	cause (4)	have (2)
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Plethora to a ruddy, 'weather beaten' facial appearance where the skin an unusually red or bluish appearance. Facial plethora usually by an abnormally high haemoglobin concentration. This.....usually by chronic cyanotic lung disease in which hypoxia erythropoietin. Polycythaemia rubra vera is a myeloproliferative disorder that very high haemoglobin levels. Plethora in the absence of hypoxic cyanosis. The conjunctiva a characteristic 'plum' colour and on fundoscopy the increased blood viscosity the venules to a thickened 'sausage-shaped' appearance.

Answers

Exercise 1

Use the correct form of the passive to make passive response:

1. My homework was really difficult. Thank god for my brother!

My brother helped me.

I **was helped** by my brother.

2. I am training for the Olympics, with the help of my trainer, John Adams.

Active: John Adams **is training** me.

Active: John Adams **trains** me.

Passive: I am being trained by John Adams.

Passive: I am trained by John Adams.

3. My brother is cleaning the windows. So they can't be fixed right now.

The windows **are being cleaned**. So they can't be fixed right now.

4. The alarm went off **when** we were in the museum with the guide!

When we were being guided in the museum, the alarm went off.

The alarm was turned off when we were in the museum. It was so noisy!

Exercise 2

Use verbs in the boxes below to complete the paragraphs. Choose:

- subject + verb
- tense
- active/passive

get	waste	challenging	keep	prepare	take	have to
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I **have been preparing** for this exam for a long time. It is **challenging!** I **have been kept** awake at night by it! It involves a lot of different aspects of mathematics and I know that I will **have to** be really focused in order to **get** the result I need. It will **take** a lot of concentration to make sure I don't **waste** a single second in the exam!

monitor	have (2)	hit	operate	observe	keep	realise	bring
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A man **was brought** to our ER department **by** an ambulance two months ago. He **had been hit** by a truck and he **had** a range of injuries. We **realised** he **had** severe internal bleeding, so we **operated** . He **was kept in** for two weeks. He **was monitored** and **observed** round the clock.

affect	experience	worsen	diagnose	anticipate	use
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Mrs Johnson **was diagnosed** with alopecia areata three years ago. **Since** then she **has been experiencing / has experienced** intermittent balding. Various parts of the body **are affected / have been affected**. Both topical creams and steroid injections **have been used** since her diagnosis, with some success. At this stage, there is no indication that the condition **has got worse / has worsened/ is worsening** and therefore, progression to alopecia totalis **is not anticipated**.

occur	stimulate	assume	refer	cause (4)	have (2)
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Plethora **refers** to a ruddy, 'weather beaten' facial appearance where the skin **has** an unusually red or bluish appearance. Facial plethora **is** usually **caused by** an abnormally high haemoglobin concentration. This **is** usually **caused by** chronic cyanotic lung disease in which hypoxia **stimulates** erythropoietin. Polycythaemia rubra vera is a myeloproliferative disorder that **causes** very high haemoglobin levels. Plethora **occurs** in the absence of hypoxic cyanosis. The conjunctiva **has** a characteristic 'plum' colour and on fundoscopy the increased blood viscosity **causes** the venules to **assume** a thickened 'sausage-shaped' appearance.