

The Passive Voice (Pre-Intermediate - Intermediate)

Rules

1. The Passive Voice is formed by a proper form of the verb *be* and Past Participle of the main verb.

E.g. The letters were written by the same person. She is married to an American. It will soon be done.

2. We use the Passive Voice when a person who does smth isn't known or important; and to report unpleasant things. The agent can be omitted.

E.g. America was discovered in 1492 (by Christopher Columbus).

Look, the window is broken! How much money has been stolen?

3. When we need to replace the Active Voice by the Passive, the Object becomes the Subject. If we have two objects, the first should be a person, not a thing (in most cases).

Compare: Mary bought *a new car*. - A new car was bought by Mary.

We gave *Mark a new computer* for his birthday. - Mark was given a new computer for his birthday. A new computer was given to Mark for his birthday.

4. If the main verb takes a preposition (necessary for the meaning), we put it at the end of a phrase.

E.g. We *looked for* the book everywhere but didn't find it. - The book was *looked for* everywhere.

5. Only *transitive* verbs are normally used in the Passive Voice structures.

Compare: -She took the book from the table. (What did she take?) - The book was taken by her.

-She hardly ever smiles. -He became a famous artist. -They haven't arrived yet.

6. *Reflexive* verbs don't take the Passive forms. Reflexive pronouns can be omitted (when we speak about things people normally do for themselves).

E.g. I taught myself to play the piano. He shaved and put on his best suit.

7. *Ergative* verbs hardly ever take the Passive forms. The most common ergative verbs are: *break; boil; begin; start; open; close; improve; increase; decrease; drop; grow; move and some other*.

E.g. The car broke down on our way home. The door closed and we stayed in the dark.

The Main Patterns

	<i>Simple</i>	<i>Continuous</i>	<i>Perfect</i>	<i>Modal verbs</i>
p r e s e n t	AM/IS/ARE (NOT) DONE -I am often bored. -Are you often asked such questions? -He isn't married. -Why isn't she often invited to parties?	AM/ARE/IS (NOT) BEING DONE -Your dresses are being washed now. -Which point is being discussed now?	HAVE/HAS (NOT) BEEN DONE -What has been done to improve the situation? -They haven't been warned about the changes in the schedule yet.	CAN/MUST/SHOULD(NOT) BE DONE -This job must be finished by Monday. -Cars can't be parked in front of the gate. -Should the text be translated now?
p a s t	WAS/WERE (NOT) DONE -He was born in Kent -Who were these letters written by? -The key was lost yesterday.	WAS/WERE (NOT) BEING DONE -When I entered the room, the documents were being signed by him.	HAD (NOT) BEEN DONE -Long before the book was first screened it had been published and sold in millions of copies.	COULD (NOT)/HAD TO BE DONE -It was so dark that the road signs could hardly be seen. -The project had to be launched in October.
f u t u r e	WILL (NOT) BE DONE -Will the parcel be delivered to my home? -I hope they won't be offended by it.		WILL (NOT) HAVE BEEN DONE -The table will have been laid by 7 o'clock. -In 5 years time my loan will finally have been paid off.	

Do the exercises.

1. Open the brackets, using the proper form of the main verb.

- 1) She is (tire) of her work.
- 2) I am not (interest) in politics.
- 3) She was so (surprise) when she saw them together.
- 4) This project must be (launch) as soon as possible.
- 5) The British Museum is (visit) by thousands of tourists every year.
- 6) Do you know how much money was (spend) on our house?
- 7) "What is (do) can't be (undo)."
- 8) My parents have never been (please) with me.
- 9) He was (bear) in 1982 in London.
- 10) The city is densely (populate).
- 11) But this hasn't been (explain) to us!
- 12) I was (teach) to swim when I was 6.
- 13) I can't get (marry): all nice girls have already been (take)!
- 14) I'm sorry, but this letter can't be (deliver) to the addressee.
- 15) Unfortunately, a lot of mistakes have been (do) in this test. Another test will be (give) to you tomorrow.
- 16) In 50 years from now only electric cars will be (drive) in cities.
- 17) The first university was (found) in Italy in the 9th century AD.
- 18) Ten fish were (catch) yesterday by me and my brother!
- 19) Sorry, Sir, your parcel hasn't been (find) yet.
- 20) –Where is my shirt? – Don't worry – it's being (iron) right now.
- 21) The children mustn't be (leave) alone on the street.
- 22) I do hope that when we meet next time all the tricky matters will have been (tackle) and (decide).

2. Study the examples of the ways to replace the Active Voice by the Passive.

- 1) As I am a celebrity, people often ask me personal questions. - As a celebrity, I am often asked personal questions.
- 2) His parents brought him up very strictly. – He was brought up very strictly.
- 3) What have you done to cut our costs? – What has been done to cut our costs?
- 4) Nobody will find them there. – They won't be found there.
- 5) You can't borrow any books from the library unless you've returned those you've checked out before. – No other books can be borrowed from the library unless those checked out before have been returned.
- 6) Why are Jane's friends laughing at her? – Why is Jane being laughed at?
- 7) At 6 o'clock they were still discussing the first item of the agenda. – At 5 o'clock the first item of the agenda was still being discussed.
- 8) Critics have never taken to Jack Night's parts, nevertheless, the public have always considered him a great actor. – Jack Night's parts have never been taken to by critics, nevertheless, he has always been considered a great actor by the public.
- 9) If you haven't received the bill, we will send it out again. You must pay the bill within 5 days. – If the bill hasn't been received, another one will be sent to you. It must be paid within 5 days.
- 10) They were able to buy a new flat in the city only after they had sold their parents' house. – Their new flat in their city centre could be bought only after their parents' house had been sold.

3. Making up questions in the Passive Voice is more difficult than in the Active Voice. Remember that there can be only one auxiliary verb in a sentence. The word order is as follows: *question word* (if any); *auxiliary verb*; *subject*; *main verb* in its corresponding form; *other members* of a sentence. Study the examples.

- Who is this letter written by? -Are you often criticised in your job? -Who was Australia discovered by?
- Am I being chased right now? -Has she been sent an invitation yet? -Will your flat be rented?
- Can my car be left here? -Why haven't the books been returned yet? – How soon should it be printed?

Make up questions to the underlined words or phrases.

E.g. "American Tragedy" was written by Theodor Dreiser. – Who was "American tragedy" written by?

Your car is being washed now. – What is being done to my car now?

- 1) Mobile phones must be switched off when you enter the auditorium. –
- 2) The contract hasn't been signed yet. – (general question)
- 3) They haven't been invited to the party because my wife doesn't like them. –
- 4) He was accused of fraud. –
- 5) Ten employees have been fired for the past 2 years. –
- 6) Jim is being questioned by the inspector right now. – (general question)
- 7) Her first film was made in the UK. –
- 8) Ibiza has been considered the world clubbing capital since the 1960s. –
- 9) Only one participant to the contest can be chosen as the winner. –
- 10) The meeting was put off until tomorrow because the draft of the contract hadn't been prepared. –
- 11) Your room has just been tidied. –
- 12) Young people are often blamed for being selfish and badly-behaved. –
- 13) 20 000 tones of ice has been provided by Mother Nature for the building of this ice hotel. –
- 14) St Paul's Cathedral was created by Sir Christopher Wren. –
- 15) The meeting will have been finished by 12 o'clock. – (general question)
- 16) This room will be fully redecorated. –

4. Replace the Active Voice by the Passive. Do not change the Tense. Mind the prepositions.

- 1) We don't allow the children to use the computer for playing games or surfing the net.
- 2) Why didn't you tell me about the accident?
- 3) Where did you find this bag?
- 4) They kept him prisoner for 4 years and then released.
- 5) When did they publish this novel for the first time?
- 6) How many flowers should I buy? How much can I spend on them?
- 7) Will anybody accompany you to the station?
- 8) Has anybody solved this problem yet?
- 9) Why do Jeremy's classmates often laugh at him?
- 10) What did you make this salad with?
- 11) Why didn't you throw away all these old things?
- 12) Parents always worry about their children. But do children ever think about their parents?
- 13) I haven't translated the text yet. Can you help me please?
- 14) I bought my Mum a nice photo album.
- 15) The journey excited the travellers a lot.
- 16) He shut himself away in his room: nobody will bother him there.
- 17) I asked her to forget the offence but she didn't forgive me.
- 18) The blood covered him. They were looking at him with horror!
- 19) The children hid the bottle with a map inside in the wood.
- 20) They have already sent for the doctor.
- 21) The flood killed about 10 000 people.
- 22) The police investigated the crime scene but didn't find anything.
- 23) I think the prosecutor will charge him with murder and the judge will sentence him to life imprisonment..
- 24) I haven't sold my old car yet, so I can't buy a new car.
- 25) When will they hold a meeting?
- 26) Has she kept the photos so far?
- 27) Have they built their new house yet?
- 28) –Have you booked the hotel yet? – No, I will do it tomorrow.
- 29) I wasn't late because my sister had taken me to the airport in her car.
- 30) Everybody knows this story.
- 31) You can't do this job for 3 days. I'm sure you won't have finished it by Friday.

- 32) You have to take this medicine after a meal and with a lot of water.
- 33) At that very moment the police were investigating the crime scene.
- 34) Nobody could hear their talk – it was too noisy in the room.
- 35) How much fruit have you bought?

5. Open the brackets, using proper Active Tense forms. Change them into Passive. In some sentences, you can't do this.

- 1) Our children (not come) back from their holidays yet.
- 2) The band just (release) a new album. It (be) number one hit?
- 3) She hardly ever (smile) at me.
- 5) What (frighten) you so much?
- 6) Why you (not warn) me that you (not come) to dinner?
- 7) How many staff they (take) on since last year?
- 8) They (found) their company two years ago and it soon (become) very successful.
- 9) How many copies you (sell) so far?
- 10) Anybody (see) me off next Monday?
- 11) She (leave) her bag in the room and (not come) back to take it because something (upset) her.
- 12) I can't wait any longer! You (can)(tell) Mr. Smith that I (call) him back later?
- 13) The plane (break) up in the storm. Nobody (survive).
- 14) The airline company (inform) the passengers that they (cancel) the flight.
- 15) When they (invent) paper?
- 16) How many people doctors (save) since scientists (discover) antibiotics?
- 17) The wind (do) a lot of damage to the roof.
- 18) Anybody (see) the thieves? How they (manage) to break into the house?
- 19) What (surprise) me most of all (be) his new look: he (dye) his hair red!
- 20) I (not recognise) her: she (change) a lot.
- 21) His words really (hurt) me.
- 22) We (arrive) at the airport well before the flight and (check) in quickly.
- 23) When my kids (be) little they (fight) a lot.
- 24) The war (break) in 1939.
- 25) I (hope) you (understand) the rules.

6. Open the brackets, using proper tense forms, both Active and Passive. You will sometimes need to change the word order and add prepositions.

- 1) Maria (not want) to be a nurse. She (think) she (make) to be a singer.
- 2) He (accuse) of stealing his aunt's car. The case (hear) in the Low Court next month.
- 3) –You (know) the rules? –No, I (not explain) the rules. – Well, you (cannot; leave) your desk without permission and the clients (cannot; put) on hold for more than 3 minutes.
- 4) –You (hear) from Mark lately? – Yes, he just (call) me yesterday. He (tell) me he (get; marry) on the 12th of June. We all (invite). – Oh, I'm afraid I (cannot; make) it, I (leave) for Greece. –What you (do) there? – You (not believe) it: my sister (get; married) on the 11th of June! I (invited) a month ago.
- 5) Jack (retire) last year because he (not feel) like working as a sales rep any more. Now he (work) as a guard at the warehouse. He (say) he's happy with his job. I (see) him the other day. He (say) he never (feel) that free before.
- 6) –How it (happen)? – I (drive) as usual at 60 miles per hour when all of a sudden my car (start) making some strange noise. I (buy) it just a few months ago and I (not expect) it to be out of order so soon. I really (surprise) that it (break) down so soon!
- 7) –I really (annoyed) with the delay. We just (inform) that the flight an hour (delay)! I (expect) in Hamburg at exactly 13.00. – Why you (not call) your colleagues and (say) that you (be late)? If you (explain) to them that it (be not) your fault, you (not blame).
- 8) Don't worry! The kids (look) very well by Sarita. She (be) an experiences baby-sitter: she (work) as a nanny for 15 years. And the families she (work) for (please) with her work.
- 9) –We (visit) Salzburg and Lentz as well? – No, they (not take) in our itinerary.

- 10) You (keep) making mistakes. Why I never (listen)?
- 11) Why everything (mess up) on my desktop?
- 12) Who "Gone with the Wind" (write)?
- 13) How many times "Hamlet" (stage)? How many times it (screen)?

7. Replace the Active Voice with the Passive. Sometimes, you can't do this.

- 1) I know his hand-writing: it's him who wrote this letter.
- 2) The Romans founded London in the 1st century AD. They built good roads and bridges and the first drainage system.
- 3) Critics consider Al Pachino one of the most talented Hollywood actors. Everybody knows his brilliant performance in the films like "The God Father", "The Merchant of Venice" or "Devil's advocate". American Academy has twice awarded him with an Oscar. Other world cinematography associations have given him different prizes as well.
- 4) They say Russian winters are very cold.
- 5) She cooked the dinner and laid the table. Then she switched on the television and sat on the sofa.
- 6) When they were redecorating the bedroom Nick found the ring his wife had lost several weeks ago.
- 7) She didn't get what he was saying. She was going to ask something but he turned and went away.
- 8) We saw the castle in the distance: it looked gloomy but mysterious. The guide told us an old legend about the beautiful princess whose husband kept her there as if in prison.
- 9) I sent him the reports. It surprises me to hear that he hadn't received them. If he has lost them, as it often happens to him, we will run into trouble.
- 10) Shakespeare wrote his first play when he was 21. At that time he was working as an actor in London. He wrote his last play just before he left London, at the age of 52. He retired to Stratford a wealthy man, but his life wasn't happy. His wife and daughters didn't forgive him; he tried to continue writing but created nothing special. Generations of readers still appreciate him for his unforgettable verse and drama. Theaters all over the world have staged his plays. Critics say that nobody has surpassed his genius so far.
- 11) Don't worry, I'm sure they will return the money.
- 12) Mary and John are throwing a housewarming party! They moved just last month but they have already redecorated the flat. They have invited all their friends. It's going to be a great rave!
- 13) "Smith & Dalton" sent us their latest catalogues last week. Have we received them yet?
- 14) When did Yuri Dolgoruky found Moscow? When did it become the capital of Russia?
- 15) Have you bought everything I asked? Oh, why didn't you buy coffee? We ran out of it 2 days ago!
- 16) Who has broken the window, boys? If you don't tell me the truth, I will detain all of you and give you 300 lines, and write a note to your parents.
- 17) Why are you always splashing out? Didn't your parents teach you to be good with money when you were young? Yesterday, you spent a fortune on clothes. Your parents won't lend you any money again. Do you really think you can find a better job that easily?
- 18) Nobody will help you with the cleaning, Ann. You've done all that mess so you must put everything in order yourself. And mind it: if you don't do it right now, I won't let you go for a walk with Sarah.
- 19) They had published his first novel long before Waltham made his film based on it.
- 20) In the 18th century, chemists disproved some old theories and put forward new ones.
- 21) Alan Turing, an English mathematician, created the computer in 1936, although other inventors had created some prototypes of the computer long before.
- 22) I'm afraid I can't translate this text without a dictionary. May somebody help me with it?
- 23) Jack retired in 2010, since then nobody has seen him here.
- 24) Your jeans? I am washing them right now. You can't put on dirty things when you want to go out!
- 25) They haven't delivered our order yet. I think they will leave it until the last minute.
- 26) I'm afraid I've lost my umbrella. Can I borrow yours for a day or two?
- 27) Nobody informed me that they had changed the time of the meeting.