

■ Passives and causatives

The passive

When we don't know who does/did something	The car was stolen at approximately 1.30 am.
When it's obvious who does/did something	Having been introduced in 1988, the Road Traffic Act regulates all vehicle use on UK roads.
When it's not important who does/did something	The XL500 was designed with young families in mind, so there's plenty of room in the boot.
To emphasise new information (which appears at the end of the sentence)	This type of submarine was developed during the Second World War by the Americans.
To avoid starting clauses with long expressions	We were surprised by the number of people trying to leave the city for the long weekend. (More natural than The number of people trying to leave the city for the long weekend surprised us.)
To produce a formal style	All passengers are required to present their ticket to the inspector.

Impersonal passive

Form	Common verbs	Example
noun + verb in passive form + infinitive / perfect infinitive	agree, assume, believe, claim, consider, estimate, expect, feel, find, guarantee, know, mean, presume, regard, report, say, suppose, think, understand	Tourism is expected to become a major part of the country's economy.
There + verb in passive form + infinitive / perfect infinitive		There are reported to have been a record number of accidents on the roads this year.
It + verb in passive form + that clause	accept, agree, argue, assume, believe, calculate, claim, consider, estimate, expect, feel, know, presume, report, say, suggest, suppose, think, understand	It is thought that the new railway will provide employment opportunities for local people.

Direct and indirect object

Some verbs in active sentences can be followed by both a direct and an indirect object (usually a person). Common verbs include: *bring, buy, get, give, leave, lend, make, offer, owe, pass, pay, promise, refuse, send, show, take, teach, tell, write*, etc. There are two possible passive forms.

Active sentence: *Michael gave the plane tickets to Jill.*

With indirect object as subject of passive verb	Jill was given the plane tickets (by Michael).
With direct object as subject of passive verb	The plane tickets were given to Jill (by Michael).

Watch out!

- In the second structure in the table above, we sometimes omit the preposition before indirect object pronouns.
 - ✓ *Sharon's Rolls-Royce was left (to) her by her grandfather.*
- With the verbs *explain* and *suggest*, the preposition before indirect object pronouns cannot be omitted. They cannot be used with the first structure in the table above.
 - X *I was explained how to drive the train.*
 - X *How to drive the train was explained me.*
 - ✓ *How to drive the train was explained to me.*

Watch out!

- Most of the time, we do not show who does/did an action (the 'agent') in a passive or causative sentence. When we do want to refer to the agent, we use **by**.
- We should get the car looked at **by** a professional.
- When we want to refer to materials or instruments used in a passive or causative sentence, we use **with**.
- The engine is started **with** a special electronic card instead of a key.
- We use other prepositions after some past participles that are used like adjectives.
- I am frightened **of** driving on motorways.
- My car is covered **in** dirt.

Causative: get/have sb doing

Actions we make somebody/something start doing	Don't worry. We'll soon have your car running like new.
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Causative: get sb to do / have sb do

Actions we make somebody/something do for us	Did you get Alex to drive you all the way to London?
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Watch out!

- In general, **get** is more informal than **have** in causative structures.
- We can use other verbs instead of **get** and **have** with a causative meaning. They include **need**, **want** and **would like**.
- I'd like those cars **washed** by this evening, please.
- The structure **get sth done** can also mean 'finish doing something'.
- We'll set off as soon as I've **got the car fixed**.

Causative: get/have sth done

Actions we arrange for other people to do for us	Did you finally get your bike fixed?
Things we experience (usually negative and not intended)	I heard that Susie had her motorbike stolen .

Watch out!

- Some verbs are not usually used in the passive. They include intransitive verbs such as **appear**, **arrive**, **die**, etc.
- Many verbs used statively are also not usually used in the passive. They include **consist**, **deserve**, **fit**, **have**, **lack**, **look**, **mind**, **realise**, **resemble**, **seem**, **suit**, etc.
- The verb **let** is not used in the passive when it means 'allow', although phrasal verbs with **let** can be used in the passive.
- Alice was clearly **let off** with a warning.
- Some verbs can be followed by the bare infinitive (without **to**) in active sentences. They are followed by the full infinitive in passive sentences. These verbs include **hear**, **help**, **make** and **see**.
- We **heard** Jim **say** he was going to Albania. (active)
- Jim **was heard to say** he was going to Albania. (passive)

Avoiding the passive

The passive is not normally used with verbs in the present perfect continuous, past perfect continuous, future perfect continuous or following.

in progress	✓ Preparations for the flight will be in progress as the President arrives at the airport.
in training	✓ At the end of this year, I will have been in training as a pilot for four years.
on display	✓ Vintage cars have been on display in the town centre all this week.
under consideration	✓ By the time they came to a decision, the problem had been under consideration for some time.
under construction	✓ The new railway station has been built for two years now. ✓ The new railway station has been under construction for two years now.

A If the verb in bold is correct, put a tick. If it is incorrect, rewrite it correctly.

- 1 Could you tell me where your passport **was been issued**?
- 2 When the winning actor **was** finally **announced**, a big cheer went up.
- 3 **Has** your business trip to Calcutta next week **confirmed** by the Indian office?
- 4 Everyone who **was been invited** to the wedding came.
- 5 The wire coat hanger **invented** in 1903 by a Mr Parkhouse.
- 6 The issue **has discussed** in Parliament yesterday, but no decisions were taken.
- 7 By the time we get there, the problem **should have been sorted out**.
- 8 Britain **was be invaded** by the Romans under Emperor Claudius in 43 AD.
- 9 The party **had been planned** months in advance, but we still had problems.
- 10 After **be treated**, I was allowed to leave the hospital.
- 11 We boarded the ship and **were showing** to our cabin by a steward.
- 12 The new supermarket **is to be opened** by an actor from a soap opera.

B Write a verb from the box in the correct passive form in each gap.

allow • ask • find • give • know • light • make • meet • show • write

- 1 The stolen items in the attic of an empty house last week.
- 2 When the open-air cinema opens, the first film will be *Vertigo*.
- 3 Questions in Parliament about the Minister's business interests.
- 4 We're looking forward to a guided tour of the whole factory.
- 5 Just imagine that when these words, Europeans had not yet discovered America.
- 6 Once the barbecue, we'll be able to start cooking.
- 7 Before to see the invention, I had to agree not to tell anyone.
- 8 I would really like at the airport, if that's possible.
- 9 It very clear to us that we weren't welcome.
- 10 Gareth says he's always wanted as someone with a good sense of humour.

C Circle the correct word or phrase.

- 1 Global warming is thought **to be caused** / **is caused** by pollution.
- 2 There **are to be estimated** / **are estimated** to be about 5,400 different species of mammals.
- 3 It **is to be reported** / **has been reported** that gunshots have been heard in the city centre.
- 4 The escaped prisoner is believed **to use** / **to have used** a rope to climb the wall.
- 5 It **is to be calculated** / **is calculated** that about 60% of a man's body mass is water.
- 6 Over 200 people **are being understood** / **are understood** to have been injured in the explosion.
- 7 It is considered impolite in some cultures **to be eaten** / **to eat** with your left hand.
- 8 There **mean** / **were meant** to have been 60 crates of olives in the order, not 600!
- 9 **It** / **There** has been suggested that people who don't recycle should pay more tax.
- 10 Your order is guaranteed **will be delivered** / **to be delivered** within three working days.