

Lesson three : passive voice

Study the following example :

-That house was built in 1950. 'was built' is passive. Compare active and passive:

-Somebody built the house in 1950 (active)

Subject **Object**

-This house was built in 1950. (passive)

Subject

- We use an active verb to say what the subject does:
 - My grandfather was a builder. He **built** this house in 1950.
 - It's a big company. It **employs** two hundred people.
- We use a passive verb to say what happens to the subject:
 - This house is quite old. It **was built** in 1950.
 - Two hundred people **are employed** by the company.
- When we use the passive, who or what causes the action is often unknown or unimportant:
 - A lot of money **was stolen** in the robbery (somebody stole it but we don't know who)
 - **Is** this room **cleaned** every day? (does somebody clean it?) it's not important who.
- if we want to say who does or what causes the action, we use **by**....:
 - This house was built **by my grandfather**
 - Two hundred people are employed **by the company**.
- the passive is be (is/was/have been etc ; the tense of to be is the same tense of the main verb)
+ the past participle (done/cleaned/seen...):
 - Be done/ be cleaned/ be seen/ be damaged/ be built.....
- **Study the active and the passive forms of the present simple and past simple:**

Present simple

Active : clean (s)/ see (s)...

-Somebody cleans the room every day

Passive: am/is/are cleaned/seen...

-This room is cleaned by somebody

*Many accidents **are caused** by careless drivers

*I'm not often **invited** to parties

*How **is** this word **pronounced**?

Past simple

Active: cleaned/ saw...

-Somebody **cleaned** this room yesterday

Passive: was/were cleaned/saw..

This room **was cleaned** yesterday

*We **were woken up** by a loud noise during the night

*Did you go to the party? No, I **wasn't invited**

*How much money **was stolen**?

Infinitive :

Active: to do/ clean...

Somebody **will clean** the room later

Passive: to be done/cleaned...

The room **will be cleaned** by somebody later

*This situation is serious. Something must **be done** before it's too late.

*A mystery is something that can't **be explained**.

*The music was very loud and could **be heard** from a long way away.

Present perfect:

Active: have/has done

The room looks nice. Somebody **has cleaned** it.

Passive: have/has been done

The room looks nice. It **has been cleaned**.

*Have you heard the news? The president **has been shot!**

*Are you going to the party? No, I **haven't been invited**

Past perfect:

Active: had done

The room looked nice. Somebody **had cleaned** it.

Passive: had been done

The room looked nice. It **had been cleaned**.

*The vegetables didn't taste very good. They **had been cooked** for too long.

Present continuous:

Active: am/is/are doing

Somebody **is cleaning** the room at the moment.

Passive: am/is/are being done

The room **is being cleaned** at the moment

*There's somebody walking behind us. I think we **are being followed**.

Past continuous:

Active: was/were doing

Somebody **was cleaning** the room when I arrived.

Passive: was/were being done

The room **was being cleaned** when I arrived.

*There was somebody walking behind us. We **were being followed**.

Practice:

A- Complete the following sentences with one the verbs: do, send, wake up, make, spend.

1- The situation is serious. Something mustbefore it's too late.

2- I haven't received the letter. It mightto the wrong address.

- 3- A decision will not.....till the next meeting.
- 4- I told the hotel receptionist that I wanted to.....at 6:30am next morning.
- 5- Do you think that less money should.....on armaments?

B- Rewrite these sentences. Write a passive sentence.

- 1- Somebody has cleaned the room.....
- 2- They have postponed the concert.....
- 3- Somebody is using the computer at the moment.....
- 4- I didn't realise that somebody was recording our conversation.....
- 5- They are building a new ring road round the city.....

Key answers:

A- 1- must be done

2-have been sent

3-be taken

4-be woken up

5-be spent

B- 1- The room has been cleaned.

2- The concert have been postponed

3- The computer is being used by somebody

4-I didn't realise that our conversation was being recorded

5-A new ring road is being built round the city.