

THE PASSIVE

The Passive– Have something done

How the Passive is formed

We form the Passive by using the verb TO BE followed by the past participle.

*The police officer **saw** the robber at the airport.*

*She's **following** him.*

*She'll **catch** him soon.*

*The robber **was seen** at the airport.*

*He's **being followed**.*

*He'll **be caught** soon.*

Active		Passive
<i>to catch</i>	→	<i>to be caught</i>
<i>to have caught</i>	→	<i>to have been caught</i>
<i>catching</i>	→	<i>being caught</i>
<i>having caught</i>	→	<i>having been caught</i>
<i>am / are / is catching</i>	→	<i>am / are / is being caught</i>
<i>catch(es)</i>	→	<i>am / are / is caught</i>
<i>will catch</i>	→	<i>will be caught</i>
<i>am / are / is going to catch</i>	→	<i>am / are / is going to be caught</i>
<i>has / have caught</i>	→	<i>has / have been caught</i>
<i>caught</i>	→	<i>was / were caught</i>
<i>was catching</i>	→	<i>was being caught</i>
<i>had caught</i>	→	<i>had been caught</i>
<i>would catch</i>	→	<i>would be caught</i>
<i>would have caught</i>	→	<i>would have been caught</i>

When the Passive is used

It is used quite often in English, both in speech and writing.

When...

We don't know who or what did something.	<p>"My bike has been stolen"</p> <p>(I don't know who stole it) = Someone has stolen my bike.</p>
The action is more important than who did it.	<p>"Kennedy was shot in 1963"</p> <p>(I know who shot him, but the important fact is that Kennedy was shot).</p>
It is obvious who or what did something.	<p>"The thief's been arrested"</p> <p>(By the police, of course).</p>

- We can add BY + Person / thing to show who does the action if this information is important:
"The thief's been arrested **BY THE POLICE OFFICER**"

If the verb has 2 objects

"A witness gave **the police** **some information**".
"A witness gave **some information** **to the police**".

Either object can be the subject of a passive sentence:



"**The police** were given some information by a witness"



"**Some information** was given to the police by a witness"

To have something done

Structure we use when we ask someone else to do something for us. It is not usually necessary to say who did the action:

The president **had** the car **taken** to the airport (by his driver).
(= The president's driver **took** the car to the airport.)

I **had** my hair **cut**. (= The hairdresser **cut** my hair.)

I'm **having** my kitchen **painted**. (= The decorator **is painting** my kitchen.)

They want **to have** their car **fixed**. (= They want the garage **to fix** their car.)

In informal speech, we sometimes use *get* instead of *have*:

I **got** my hair **cut**. (= I **had** my hair **cut**.)

EXERCISE

In five of these sentences there is a mistake in a verb form. Underline each mistake and write the correction.

- 1 The children wanted to be allow to stay up late and see the fireworks. to be allowed
- 2 Our flight was delaying by fog and we missed our connection.
- 3 Lauren was sulking because she hadn't been invited to Ralph's party.
- 4 By the time we arrived at the market, the best fruit had be sold.
- 5 While the meal was being prepare we had a drink on the terrace.
- 6 The new library will be opened by the Mayor next Saturday.
- 7 I can't see any coffee in this cupboard. Was it all been finished?

ANSWERS:

- 1 2 delaying delayed 3 correct 4 be been 5 prepare prepared
6 correct 7 Was Has (> Grammar, part 1)

EXERCISE

Fill in the gaps with the correct passive form of the verb in brackets.

- 1 A government minister was found (*find*) guilty of fraud yesterday.
- 2 It was a lovely surprise to find all the washing-up (*do*) while I was asleep.
- 3 These souvenirs (*make*) by children from the local school.
- 4 I didn't come here in order (*make*) a fool of!
- 5 The votes (*count*) right now and we should know the result before midnight.
- 6 This parcel appears (*open*) before it (*delivered*).
- 7 As he (*sack*) from his previous job, he found it hard to get another.
- 8 The judges still have to decide which design (*award*) the top prize.

ANSWERS:

- 2 had been done 3 are made / have been made / were made
4 to be made 5 are being counted 6 to have been opened;
was delivered 7 had been sacked 8 will be awarded