

THE PASSIVE II

Have and get something done, need doing

- *Have/get something done*

This typically describes a service performed for us by someone else.

*I've just **had/got** my car serviced. I **have/get** it done every winter.*

It can also describe something unfortunate that happens to someone.

*We **had/got** our car broken into last month.*

Get is more likely to be used than *have* when:

i) there is a feeling that something must be done.

*/ really must **get** (have) my hair cut.*

ii) there is a feeling of eventually managing to do something.

*/ eventually **got** (had) the car fixed at the Fast Service garage.*

iii) in orders and imperatives.

Get your hair cut!

Note that *get* should not be used in the present perfect passive, where it would be confused with *have got*.

- The need to have a service done can be described with *need doing*.

*Your hair **needs cutting**.*

Passive get

Get can be used instead of *be* to form the passive in spoken language.

*Martin **got arrested** at a football match.*

Reporting verbs

- Present reference

With verbs such as *believe, know, say, think*, which report people's opinions, a passive construction is often used to avoid a weak subject, and to give a generalised opinion.

With present reference, the passive is followed by the present infinitive.

*The criminal **is thought to be** in hiding in the London area.*

*Vitamin C **is known to be** good for treating colds.*

- Past reference

With past reference, the passive is followed by the past infinitive.

*Smith **is believed to have left** England last week.*

- Past reporting verb

If the reporting verb is in the past, the past infinitive tends to follow, though not always if the verb *be* is used.

*People **thought Sue had paid** too much.*

*Sue **was thought to have paid** too much.*

*The police **thought that the thief was still** in the house.*

*The thief **was thought to still be** in the house.*

- Past reference with two objects

In this case there are two ways of making a passive sentence.

*Everyone **knows the portrait was painted** by an Italian.*

*The portrait **is known to have been painted** by an Italian.*

- Continuous infinitive

Past and present continuous infinitives are also used.

*Mary **is thought to be living** in Scotland.*

*The driver **is thought to have been doing** a U-turn.*

Verbs with prepositions

- Ending a sentence with a preposition

It is possible to end a sentence with a preposition in a sentence where a prepositional verb is made passive.

Somebody broke into our house.

*Our house was broken **into**.*

- *By* and *with*

With is used after participles such as *filled*, *packed*, *crowded*, *crammed*.

*The train was **packed with** commuters.*

The difference between *by* and *with* may involve the presence of a person:

Dave was hit by a branch, (an accident)

*Dave was hit **with** a branch*, (a person hit him with one)

- *Make* is followed by *to* when used in the passive.

My boss made me work hard.

*I was **made to** work hard by my boss.*

- *Cover* and verbs which involve similar ideas, such as *surround*, *decorate*, can use *with* or *by*. *Cover* can also be followed by *in*.

*The furniture was **covered in** dust.*

*The living room **had been decorated with** flowery wallpaper.*

Common contexts for the passive

- Formality

The passive is probably more common in written English, where there tends to be less use of personal reference in some contexts, since the audience may be unknown.

- Points mentioned in Grammar 6

The passive is used to change the focus of the sentence, to avoid generalised subjects, and to make an action impersonal. It is common in descriptions of processes, and in scientific and technical language in general.

Practice

1 Decide whether the sentences in each pair have the same meaning.



a) I've just been to the hairdresser's. What do you think?

I've just cut my hair at the hairdresser's. What do you think? *different*

b) Someone is painting our house at the moment.

We are painting our house at the moment.

c) The dentist is going to take out two of my teeth tomorrow.

I'm having two teeth taken out tomorrow.

d) The teacher made us all tidy up.

We were made to tidy up by the teacher.

e) The car is thought to have been stolen by joy-riders.

Joy-riders are thought to have stolen the car.

f) Just a minute. I'll ask someone to wrap this for you.

Just a minute. I'll have to wrap this up for you.

g) The car hasn't been serviced for a long time.

We haven't had the car serviced for a long time.

h) They're coming to put in a new water-heater next week.

We're putting in a new water-heater next week.

- i) Would you consider having plastic surgery to alter your nose?
Would you consider having your nose altered by plastic surgery?
- j) A qualified electrician checked the wiring.
We had checked the wiring with a qualified electrician.

2 Underline the correct word in each sentence.

- a) The busy shopping street was thronged *by/with* people.
- b) The emergency exit was concealed *by/from* a red curtain.
- c) The price of excursions is included *in/with* the cost of the holiday.
- d) All through January, the fields were covered *by/from* snow.
- e) The room was crammed *by/with* furniture of all descriptions.
- f) Two of the climbers were injured *by/with* falling rocks.
- g) The island is inhabited *by/from* people of mainly Chinese origin,
- h) The bank was quickly surrounded *from/with* armed police.
- i) The window had been smashed *from/with* a hammer taken from the shed,
- j) The stadium was packed *from/with* cheering fans.

3 Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the word given. Do not change the word given.

- a) The treasure is thought to date from the thirteenth century.

date

It is thought to date from the thirteenth century.

- b) Your hair needs cutting.

get

You cut.

- c) Jill's parents are making her study hard.

made

Jill her parents.

- d) Apparently the ship did not sustain any damage.

appears

The ship any damage.

- e) It is thought that the two injured men were repairing overhead cables.

have

The two injured men overhead cables.

- f) There is a rumour that the escaped prisoner is living in Spain.

be

The escaped prisoner living in Spain.

- g) We have agreed to meet again in a fortnight.

will

It has meet again in a fortnight.

- h) We decided to try again later.

would

It was try again later.

- i) There is confirmation of Mr Jackson's intended resignation.

that

It is to resign.

- j) Most of the committee thought it was not a viable solution.

not

It was thought by most of the committee.

4 Rewrite each sentence so that it ends with the word underlined.

- a) Another company has taken over our company.

Our company has been taken over.

- b) We are dealing with your complaint.

- c) We have not accounted for all the missing passengers.
- d) Someone had tampered with the lock of the front door.
- e) We don't know how they disposed of the body.
- f) I must insist that you keep to the rules.
- g) We are looking into this allegation.
- h) We will frown upon any attempts to cheat in the exam.
- i) The youngest student complained that people were picking on him.
- j) Ann was well provided for in her husband's will.

5 Complete each sentence with a suitable preposition.

- a) The tree had been decorated with coloured balls.
- b) The answers have been included the book.
- c) After the rugby match, Jim's shorts were covered mud.
- d) The victim was struck from behind a heavy object.
- e) The house was built..... money that David borrowed from the bank.
- f) The cat narrowly escaped being run over a car.
- g) When the accident happened, Sue was struck flying glass.
- h) The turkey was stuffed chestnuts, and was very tasty.
- i) No one knew that Peter had been involved the investigation.
- j) When I left the casino, my pockets were crammed..... money.

6 Complete the text using the phrases from the box.

was obliged to are believed to have been ~~is known to have experienced~~
 is not known are thought to be was packed is thought to have been
 was seen were made to was brought

A plane carrying 15 members of the government to a conference in Brussels

- (1) is known to have experienced a small-scale fire earlier this morning. The plane (2) about 20 minutes into its journey when the fire occurred in the luggage area. It (3) how the plane caught fire, but initial eyewitness accounts confirm that a trail of smoke (4) coming from the under-carriage. The fire (5) rapidly under control, but the pilot (6) make an emergency landing. Five people (7) treated for shock. The plane (8) with business people flying to Belgium. All 209 passengers (9) stay behind for questioning after landing at a military airport in northern France. Police (10) treating the incident as suspicious.

7 Rewrite the text using the passive where possible. Make sure the words underlined do not appear.

Nobody knows exactly when someone invented gunpowder. People know for a fact that the Chinese made rockets and fireworks long before people used gunpowder in Europe, which occurred at about the beginning of the thirteenth century. We generally believe that gunpowder brought to an end the 'Age of Chivalry', since anyone with a firearm could bring down a mounted knight. In fact, people did not develop efficient firearms until the sixteenth century. They used gunpowder mainly in siege cannon when people first introduced it. Later they used it in engineering work and in mining, but they found that it was extremely dangerous. Modern explosives have now replaced gunpowder, but we still use it for making fireworks, just as the Chinese did.

It is not known exactly

KEY

Grammar 7

1

- a) *Different*. Same would be:
I've just had my hair cut.
- b) *Different*. Same would be:
We are having our house painted.
- c) Same
- d) Same
- e) Same
- f) *Different*. Same would be:
I'll have this wrapped for you/I'll have someone wrap this for you.
- g) Same
- h) *Different*. Same would be:
We're having a new waterheater put in next week.
- i) Same
- j) *Different*. Same would be:
We had the wiring checked by a qualified electrician.

2

- a) *with*
- b) *by*
- c) *in*
- d) *by*
- e) *with*
- f) *by*
- g) *by*
- h) *with*
- i) *with*
- j) *with*

3

- a) *is thought to date*
- b) *need to get your hair*
- c) *is being made to study hard*
by
- d) *appears not to have*
sustained
- e) *are thought to have been*

- repairing
f) is rumoured to be
g) been agreed that we will
h) decided that we would
i) confirmed that Mr Jackson
intends
j) not to be a viable solution

4

- a) *Our company has been taken over.*
b) Your complaint is being dealt with.
c) Not all the missing passengers have been accounted for./The missing passengers have not all been accounted for.
d) The lock of the front door had been tampered with.
e) We don't know how the body was disposed of.
f) I must insist that the rules are kept to.
g) This allegation is being looked into.
h) Any attempts to cheat in the exam will be frowned upon.
i) The youngest student complained that he was being picked on.
j) In her husband's will Ann was well provided for.

5

- a) *with*
b) in
c) in/with
d) with
e) with
f) by
g) by
h) with
l) in
j) with

6

- 1) is *known to have experienced*
2) is thought to have been
3) is not known
4) was seen
5) was brought
6) was obliged to
7) are believed to have been
8) was packed
9) were made to
10) are thought to be

7

It is not known exactly when gunpowder was invented. It is known for a fact that rockets and fireworks were made by the Chinese long before gunpowder was used in Europe, which occurred at about the beginning of the thirteenth century. It is generally believed that the 'Age of Chivalry' was brought to an end by gunpowder, since a mounted knight could be brought down by anyone with a firearm. In fact, efficient firearms were not developed until the sixteenth century. When it was first introduced, gunpowder was used mainly in siege cannon. Later it was used in engineering work and mining, but it was found to be extremely dangerous. Gunpowder has now been replaced by modern explosives, but it is still used for making fireworks, just as it was by the Chinese.