Unit 42

Passive 1 (is done / was done)

A Study this example:

This house **was built** in 1935.

Was built is *passive*.

Compare active and passive:

Somebody **built** **this house** in 1935. *(active)*
subject *object*

This house **was built** in 1935. *(passive)*
subject

When we use an active verb, we say *what the subject does*: 42.2

- □ My grandfather was a builder. **He built** this house in 1935.
- □ It's a big company. **It employs** two hundred people.

When we use a passive verb, we say *what happens to the subject*:

- □ This house is quite old. **It was built** in 1935.
- □ **Two hundred people are employed** by the company.

B When we use the passive, who or what causes the action is often unknown or unimportant: 42.3

- □ 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**.

C The passive is **be** (**is/was** etc.) + *past participle* (**done/cleaned/seen** etc.):
(be) done **(be) cleaned** **(be) damaged** **(be) built** **(be) seen** etc.

For irregular past participles (**done/seen/known** etc.), see Appendix 1.

Study the active and passive forms of the *present simple* and *past simple*:

Present simple

active: **clean(s) / see(s)** etc. — Somebody **cleans** **this room** every day.

passive: **am/is/are + cleaned/seen** etc. — **This room** **is cleaned** every day.

- □ Many accidents **are caused** by careless driving.
- □ **I'm not** often **invited** to parties.
- □ How is this word **pronounced**?

Past simple

active: **cleaned/saw** etc. — Somebody **cleaned** **this room** yesterday.

passive: **was/were + cleaned/seen** etc. — **This room** **was cleaned** yesterday. 42.4

- □ 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** in the robbery?

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