

PASSIVE VOICE

Form

We form passive verbs with the **different tenses of verb to be + past participle**.

Present simple:

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

Passive: **am/is/are + cleaned/seen** etc.

Somebody **cleans** this room every day.

She **locks** the house every evening.

This room **is cleaned** every day.

The house **is locked** every evening.

Past simple:

Active: **cleaned/saw** etc.

Passive: **was/were + cleaned/seen** etc.

Somebody **cleaned** this room yesterday.

Somebody **stole** a lot of money last night.

This room **was cleaned** yesterday.

A lot of money **was stolen** last night.

Present perfect:

Active: **have/has done** etc.

Passive: **have/has been done** etc.

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

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

Use

1) We often use the passive **when we do not know who or what does/did something**.

*My car **was stolen** last night. (I don't know who stole the car.)*

2) We also use the passive **when we are not interested in who or what does/did something**.

*The factory **was painted** during the war.*

*Sarah **wasn't invited** to the party.*

In these sentences we are interested in the factory and Sarah, not who painted the factory, or who invited Sarah.

3) We also use the passive **when we do not want to say who or what does/did something**.

Active: *I **made** a mistake.*

Passive: *A mistake **was made**.*

4) **By + agent**

We sometimes use the subject of an active sentence *as agent* in a passive sentence. When this happens, we use *by* to introduce the agent in the passive. We only use *by+agent* when it is important to say who or what is responsible for something.

*The telephone was invented **by Alexander Bell** in 1876.*

*My brother was bitten **by a dog** last week.*

With + instrument/material

We use with to talk about an instrument which is used by the agent to do something.

Compare:

*I was hit **with an umbrella**. I was hit **by an old lady**.*

We also use with to talk about *materials or ingredients*.

*The room was filled **with smoke**.*

*Irish coffee is made **with whiskey**.*

Passive voice overview

Present simple	The house <i>is cleaned</i> every day.
Present continuous	The house <i>is being cleaned</i> at the moment.
Past simple	The house <i>was cleaned</i> yesterday.
Past continuous	When we came back the house <i>was being cleaned</i> .
Present perfect	The house <i>has been cleaned</i> since you last came.
Future	The house <i>will be cleaned</i> next week.
Future continuous	This time next week the house <i>will be being cleaned</i> .

Exercises

1. Choose the correct form, active or passive.

- 1) A valuable painting *stole / was stolen* from the Central Art Gallery last night.
- 2) The thieves *entered / were entered* the gallery through a small window.
- 3) Walt Disney *created / was created* the cartoon character Mickey Mouse.
- 4) This problem *discussed / was discussed* at the last meeting.
- 5) In 1964 Martin Luther King *won / was won* the Nobel Peace Prize.
- 6) The president *arrived / was arrived* in Prague yesterday afternoon.
- 7) Glass *makes / is made* from sand.
- 8) This room *doesn't use / isn't used* very often.

2. Complete the sentences using the passive:

- 1) Football _____ (play) all over the world.
- 2) Millions of cars _____ (export) from Japan every month.
- 3) The Tower of London _____ (build) at the beginning of the eleventh century.
- 4) How many languages _____ (speak) in Switzerland?
- 5) The washing machine was broken but it's OK now. It _____ (repair).
- 6) The washing machine _____ (repair) yesterday afternoon.
- 7) A factory is a place where things _____ (make).
- 8) The bridge is closed at the moment. It _____ (damage) last week and it _____ (not repair) yet.
- 9) All flights _____ (cancel) because of fog yesterday evening.
- 10) Somebody called an ambulance but nobody _____ (injure) in the accident.
- 11) Where did you get this picture? _____ (it/give) to you?
- 12) My car _____ (steal) last week but the next day it _____ (find) by the police.

3. Complete the sentences using the past simple passive of the verbs and by.

paint compose and sing invent discover direct

Example:

The Old Man and the Sea was written by Ernest Hemingway.

- 1) Radium _____ Pierre and Marie Curie.
- 2) *The Goldrush* _____ Charlie Chaplin.
- 3) *Imagine* _____ John Lennon.
- 4) The safety razor _____ King Camp Gillette.
- 5) *The Chair* _____ Vincent van Gogh.

4. Complete the sentences with *by* or *with*.

- 1) These photos were taken _____ a very cheap camera.
- 2) These photos were taken _____ my sister.
- 3) The cake was made _____ dried fruit.
- 4) The cake was made _____ his aunt.
- 5) The garage was painted _____ a new kind of paint.
- 6) The garage was painted _____ a friend of mine.