

12 The passive and the causative

12.1 General information about form

12.1A Basic forms of the passive [> LEG 12.1-3]

Study:



- 1 In the **active** voice, the subject of the verb is the person or thing that does the action:
John burnt the dinner last night.
In the **passive** voice, the action is done to the subject: *The dinner was burnt last night.*
- 2 We form the passive with a suitable form of *be* + past participle. Only verbs which take an object (**transitive verbs** [>1.2B]) can go into the passive:
The dinner was burnt. (But not *'The plane was arrived.'*)
- 3 Basic tense forms are a tense of *be* + past participle:

present:	<i>he writes</i>	→	<i>it is written</i>
past:	<i>he wrote</i>	→	<i>it was written</i>
present/past perfect:	<i>he has/had written</i>	→	<i>it has/had been written</i>
- 4 Basic modal forms are: modal + *be/have been* + past participle:

will:	<i>he will write</i>	→	<i>it will be written</i>
may:	<i>he may write</i>	→	<i>it may be written</i>
may have:	<i>he may have written</i>	→	<i>it may have been written, etc.</i>
- 5 Infinitive: *to be/to have been* + past participle [> 16.1A]:
he is/was to write → *it is to be written/it was to have been written*

Write 1: Mark with a P those sentences which will go into the passive.

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1 Someone will drive you to the airport. <u>P</u> | 6 They informed me about it. ____ |
| 2 Goldfish live in fresh water. ____ | 7 I slept till 8. ____ |
| 3 The Egyptians built pyramids. ____ | 8 It's raining. ____ |
| 4 We walked for miles yesterday. ____ | 9 You must obey the rules. ____ |
| 5 They arrived at 7 last night. ____ | 10 He's sneezing again. ____ |

Write 2: Rewrite these sentences in the passive.

- 1 *They owe a lot of money to the bank.*
..... *A lot of money is owed to the bank.*
- 2 *They have proved that there is no life on the moon.*
It
- 3 *You can buy videos like this one anywhere.*
.....
- 4 *Someone has to write the history of the European Community one day.*
.....
- 5 *Someone may have already written the history of the European Community.*
.....
- 6 *When we arrived home, we found that someone had broken one of our windows.*
.....
- 7 *They have sold their car to pay their debts.*
.....
- 8 *They hold a meeting in the village hall once a week.*
.....

12.1B The passive with progressive forms: 'She is being interviewed'

[> LEG 12.3n.6]

Study:



Only the present and past progressive [> 9.2B, 9.4B] are common in the passive. We form the passive with the progressive form of *be* (*am/is/are/was/were being*) + a past participle:
present progressive: *They are interviewing her now.* → *She is being interviewed now.*
past progressive: *They were interviewing her here.* → *She was being interviewed here.*


Write: Rewrite these sentences beginning with the words provided.

- 1 The manager always welcomes new employees.
New employees *are always welcomed by the manager.*
- 2 They're building a new supermarket near the church.
A new supermarket
- 3 They fought the battle in 1623.
The battle
- 4 Someone was cleaning the windows while I was there.
The windows
- 5 Someone has moved my desk!
My desk
- 6 They are taking the refugees to a camp outside the village.
The refugees
- 7 Someone had signed all the documents before I arrived.
All the documents
- 8 They were questioning us and searching our vehicle at the same time.
We and our vehicle
- 9 They will post our letters when the ship arrives at the next port of call.
Our letters
- 10 They are opening the case again because they're not satisfied with the verdict.
The case

12.1C Context

Write: Put in the correct forms, active or passive, of the verbs in brackets.

HOW THE OTHER HALF LIVES (?)

Lord Manners was a rich and famous banker. When he (*die*)¹..... *died*..... recently, he (*give*)²..... a magnificent funeral which (*attend*)³..... by hundreds of famous people. The funeral was going to (*hold*)⁴..... in Westminster Abbey. Many ordinary people (*line*)..... the streets to watch the procession. The wonderful black and gold carriage (*draw*)..... by six black horses. The mourners (*follow*)⁷..... in silence. Lord Manners (*give*)⁸..... a royal farewell. Two tramps were among the crowd. They (*watch*)..... the procession with amazement. As solemn music (*could hear*)¹⁰..... in the distance, one of them (*turn*)¹¹..... to the other and (*whisper*)¹²..... in admiration, 'Now that's what I call really living!'.


That's what I call really living!

12.2 Uses of the passive

12.2A Uses of the passive [> LEG 12.1,12.4.1-3]

Study:

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- 1 The passive is not just a different form of the active. It has its own uses and is very common in English. It would be hard to think of the active forms of sentences like:
Rome wasn't built in a day. The origin of the universe will never be explained.
- 2 We use the passive mainly in three ways:
 - when we don't want to take responsibility for something:
The matter will be dealt with soon. (We don't know or want to say who'll deal with it.)
 - when we want to focus on a happening, not who or what did it:
Our roof was damaged in last night's storm. (We're concerned about the roof.)
 - when we want to avoid 'vague subjects' like *one, someone, they*, etc.:
The form has to be signed. (Not **Someone/One has to sign the form.*)
English spoken. (Not **One speaks English*.) ***Shoes repaired.*** (Not **One repairs shoes*.)

Write:

Supply suitable active and passive forms in these sentences using the verbs in brackets. Some variations in tenses may be possible.

- 1 It isn't clear how far the ozone layer (damage) *has been damaged* by aerosol sprays. It may be possible to tell whether the hole over the Antarctic (widen) *has widened* after the area (investigate) *has been* high-flying planes.
- 2 These days, even the most remote places on earth (visit) by tourists. Package tours (can/arrange) for almost anywhere, from the Himalayas to the Amazonian jungle.
- 3 Notices such as (English/Speak) and (Shoes/Repair) are common. Sometimes they (translate) into different languages for the benefit of tourists.
- 4 We (constantly remind) of the way the world (become) smaller when events taking place in different parts of the globe (flash) on our television screens.
- 5 If you (involve) in a car accident and someone (hurt), you (have to) report the matter to the police. If only the vehicles (damage), drivers should exchange names and addresses.

12.2B The use of 'by' + agent (= 'doer') after a passive [> LEG 12.5]

Study:

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- 1 We use *by* only when we need to say who or what is responsible for an event:
The window was broken last night. (We don't know or want to say who or what did it.)
The window was broken by a slate that fell off the roof. (We wish to give information.)
- 2 We often use *by* + agent with the passive of verbs like *build, compose, damage, design, destroy, discover, invent, make* and *write* to identify who or what is/was responsible:
Who designed St Paul's? – It was designed by Christopher Wren.

Write:

Supply passive forms with *by* + agent where necessary.

- 1 When Jasper Morgan died his collection of pictures (sell) *was sold* to raise enough money to pay his taxes. Tremendous interest in the sale (show/the general public) *was shown by the general public*
- 2 The music that (compose/Beethoven) towards the end of his life is very different from his early music. The music (write) in extremely difficult conditions.
- 3 Many beautiful old buildings in cities (replace/modern ones) If this replacement (not control), it isn't very long before a city loses its character.

12.2C The passive with verbs of 'saying' and 'believing': 'It is said (that) ...'

[> LEG 12.8]

Study:

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We need to be sure of our facts when we say: e.g. He **was** a spy **in** World War II.

If we are not sure of our facts, we can express caution by saying:

It is said (that) he was a spy in World War II./**He was said to be** a spy in World War II.

We can express caution in three ways, with:

- 1 It (+ passive + that-clause) with e.g. agree, believe, consider, decide, hope, know, say.
It is said (that) there is plenty of oil off our own coast.
- 2 There (+ passive + to be) with e.g. allege, believe, fear, know, report, say, suppose, think:
There is said to be plenty of oil off our own coast.
- 3 Subject (not *it*) (+ passive + to-infinitive) with e.g. allege, believe, consider, know, say:
Jane is said to know all there is to know about chimpanzees.

Write: Begin these sentences with *It*, *There* or a name/a noun + passive construction.

- 1 *It is expected* that prices will rise again this month. (expect)
- 2 that all the passengers had died in the crash. (fear)
- 3 to be an expert in financial matters. (suppose)
- 4 to have committed the crime. (think)
- 5 that the sea level is rising. (think)
- 6 to be a lot of coal in the Antarctic. (think)
- 7 to be honest and reliable. (consider)
- 8 to be thousands of people waiting to renew their passports. (say)
- 9 that thousands of new jobs will be created in the computer industry. (say)
- 10 to be a fall in house prices, but I haven't noticed it. (suppose)

12.2D Context

Write: Use the correct tenses and passive forms of the verbs in brackets.



A beautiful mermaid?

FISHY TALES

Mermaids (see) ¹~~have been seen~~ by sailors for centuries. The basis of all mermaid myths (suppose) ² to be a creature called a Manatee: a kind of walrus! Mermaids used (to show)

..... in funfairs until recently. It all began in 1817 when a 'mermaid' (buy) ⁴ for \$6,000 by a sailor in the South Pacific. She (eventually sell) ⁵ to the great circus-owner Barnum. She (exhibit) ⁶ in 1842 as 'The Feejee Mermaid'. It (say) ⁷ that she earned Barnum \$1,000 a week! The thousands who saw this mermaid (*must/disappoint*)

⁸ She (cleverly make) ⁹ by a Japanese fisherman. A monkey's head (delicately sew)

¹⁰ to the tail of a large salmon. The job (so skilfully do)

¹¹ that the join between the fish and the monkey was invisible. Real imagination (*must/require*) ¹² to see this revolting creature as a beautiful mermaid combing her golden hair!