

# 14

## Passive voice (I): simple present & simple past



### Usage

A sentence can be in the active or passive voice. In an active sentence, the doer of the action is the subject. However, in a **passive** sentence, the **receiver of the action is the subject** and the form of the verb is changed to 'verb to be + past participle (p.p.)'.

Active voice	Subject: doer <u>Mum</u>	cooks	Object: receiver <u>dinner</u>	every night.
Passive voice	Subject: receiver <u>Dinner</u>	Verb: 'be' + p.p. <b>is cooked</b>	Object: doer* (by <u>Mum</u> )	every night.

\* In the passive voice, the doer of the action can either be put after the preposition 'by' or omitted. We often omit it when it is unimportant, unknown or obvious.

We use the passive voice:

1. to put **the focus** on the **receiver** of the action.

**e.g.** The black-faced spoonbill **is fed** by an old man daily.

2. when the doer of the action is **unknown**.

**e.g.** The famous painting **was stolen** from the museum.  
(We don't know who stole the painting.)

3. when the doer is **obvious**.

**e.g.** Diners **are served** in restaurants.  
(It is clear that waiters and waitresses serve diners in restaurants.)





## Educator's Tips



We can't use the passive voice with:

1. intransitive verbs (verbs that are not followed by an object).

✗ Bobby **was** arrived late this morning. Intransitive verb

✓ A little bird **was** rescued yesterday. Transitive verb

2. verbs which describe states instead of actions, such as *be*, *feel*, *fit*, *have* and *live*.

✗ A pair of big blue eyes **is** *had* by the girl.

✓ The girl **has** a pair of big blue eyes.



## Part 1 The Simple Present

We form passive statements, *yes / no*-questions and short answers in the simple present tense in the following ways:

Receiver	Verb to be	p.p.		Doer
I	<b>am + (not)</b>	<b>attacked</b>	by	a tiger.
You / We / They	<b>are + (not)</b>			
He / She / It	<b>is + (not)</b>			

Receiver + Verb form				Doer	Short answer	
<b>Am</b>	I	<b>supported</b>	by	the public?	Yes,	<b>am.</b>
					No,	<b>am not.</b>
<b>Are</b>	you / we / they				Yes,	<b>are.</b>
		No,	<b>are not.</b>			
<b>Is</b>	he / she / it				Yes,	<b>is.</b>
					No,	<b>is not.</b>

Remember that in questions, we put the receiver after the helping verb *be* (e.g. *Is, Am, Are*).

### Exercise 1.1

Underline the correct words in brackets.

1. The new policies ( do not welcome / are not welcomed by ) the citizens.
2. The performers ( entertain / are entertained by ) the audience at the variety show.
3. Breakfast ( does not prepare / is not prepared ) at night.

4. Car accidents ( happen / are happened ) frequently on this highway.

5. A: ( Do / Are ) the jeans ( fit / fitted by ) you?

B: No, they ( don't / aren't ).

6. A: ( Does / Is ) champagne ( serve / served ) in the party?

B: Yes, it ( does / is ).



We can change statements and *yes / no*-questions from the active voice to the passive voice in three steps:

**STEP 1**

Swap the position of the doer and receiver. For other expressions except the verb (e.g. time and place), we usually put them at the end.

**STEP 2**

Add *by* before the doer where necessary.

**STEP 3**

Change the verb to its passive form.

*Example*

Jane eats cereal at breakfast.  
(Active statement)

Does Jane eat cereal at home?  
(Active question)

**STEP 1**

Cereal eats Jane at breakfast.

Does cereal eat Jane at home?

**STEP 2**

Cereal eats **by** Jane at breakfast.

Does cereal eat **by** Jane at home?

**STEP 3**

Cereal **is eaten** by Jane at breakfast.  
(Passive statement)

**Is** cereal **eaten** by Jane at home?  
(Passive question)



**Educator's Tips**



**When** we change an active sentence into a passive sentence:

1. we usually omit the doer if it is *someone, somebody* or *people*.

**e.g.** *People pick apples from the tree.*

→ *Apples **are picked** from the tree (by people).*

2. remember to change the subject pronouns and object pronouns accordingly.

**e.g.** *They interviewed her last night.*

*X Her **was interviewed** by they last night.*

*✓ She **was interviewed** by them last night.*



## Exercise 1.2

Change the following sentences from the active voice to the passive voice.

- Ivy reads fashion magazines daily. → Fashion magazines are read by Ivy daily.
- Do the girls not like the gifts? → Are \_\_\_\_\_ not liked by \_\_\_\_\_?
- Grandpa watches the news report every night.  
→ \_\_\_\_\_ is watched by \_\_\_\_\_.
- Does the lion scare the other animals?  
→ Are the other animals scared \_\_\_\_\_ the lion?
- Judy doesn't buy expensive dresses from the boutique.  
→ Expensive dresses \_\_\_\_\_ by Judy from the boutique.
- The hero defeats the bad people at the end of the movie.  
→ \_\_\_\_\_
- Do people eat turkeys and pudding during Christmas?  
→ \_\_\_\_\_



## Part 2 The Simple Past

We form passive statements, *yes / no*-questions and short answers in the simple past tense in the following ways:

Receiver	Verb to be	p.p.		Doer
I / He / She / It	<b>was + (not)</b>	<b>chosen</b>	by	the organisation.
You / We / They	<b>were + (not)</b>			

Receiver + Verb form			Doer	Short answer		
<b>Was</b>	I / he / she / it	<b>shocked</b>	by the accident?	Yes,	I / he / she / it	<b>was.</b>
				No,		<b>was not.</b>
<b>Were</b>	you / we / they			Yes,	you / we / they	<b>were.</b>
				No,		<b>were not.</b>

Remember that in questions, we put the receiver after the helping verb *be* (e.g. *Was, Were*).

## Exercise 2.1

Change the following sentences from the active voice to the passive voice.

1. Detective Holmes solved the mystery yesterday.

→ \_\_\_\_\_ was solved by \_\_\_\_\_ yesterday.

2. Did the boy not choose the green belt at the shop?

→ Was \_\_\_\_\_ not chosen by \_\_\_\_\_ ?

3. Did the visitors feed the tigers at the zoo?

→ Were the tigers fed \_\_\_\_\_ the visitors at the zoo?



4. The government didn't fund the programme last year.

→ The programme \_\_\_\_\_ by the government last year.

5. Did someone report a crime anonymously last night?

→ \_\_\_\_\_

★ 6. Sally did not invite him to her birthday party yesterday.

→ \_\_\_\_\_

## Exercise 2.2

Fill in the blanks with the correct form of the verbs in brackets. Underline the time expression in each question.

1. Are the cows milked by the farmer daily? (milk)



2. The new best-selling novel \_\_\_\_\_ in all bookstores as usual. (sell)

3. \_\_\_\_\_ the lady's dress \_\_\_\_\_ by the red wine yesterday? (stain)

4. Illegal DVDs \_\_\_\_\_ in Hong Kong widely ten years ago. (find)

5. Jason: \_\_\_\_\_ you \_\_\_\_\_ by your wife every morning? (wake)

Alex: Yes, I \_\_\_\_\_ because she \_\_\_\_\_ by my snores every night.

6. Tim: \_\_\_\_\_ the diamond crown \_\_\_\_\_ by a man last night? (steal)

Taylor: No, it \_\_\_\_\_. It \_\_\_\_\_ by a woman.

**Theme:** Technology**Text Type:** Magazine article

## Unit Recap

Angela is writing an article about some high-tech gadgets for a technology magazine. Complete the article with the correct active or passive form of the verbs in brackets.

### Era of Gadgets



People worldwide (1) \_\_\_\_\_ (use) smartphones and tablets. How much do you know about these gadgets?

A smartphone (2) \_\_\_\_\_ (define) as a mobile phone with features like a personal computer, while a tablet is a small computer which is integrated into a flat screen. Unlike in the past when a physical keyboard (3) \_\_\_\_\_ (connect) to a desktop computer, smartphones and tablets (4) \_\_\_\_\_ (operate) simply by tapping the screen.

These gadgets have many **functions**. First, they (5) \_\_\_\_\_ always \_\_\_\_\_ (use) for taking photos and videos. Second, users can connect them to the Internet. Third, users are able to (6) \_\_\_\_\_ (install) different apps like maps and games. (7) \_\_\_\_\_ the apps \_\_\_\_\_ (download) for free? Some of them are but some aren't.

Obviously, people's lives (8) \_\_\_\_\_ (make) much easier with these devices. In the past, phone calls were made and letters (9) \_\_\_\_\_ (write) to people living overseas. Shopping (10) \_\_\_\_\_ (not do) through any apps but in real shops. Where (11) \_\_\_\_\_ TV programmes \_\_\_\_\_ (broadcast)? On TV channels of course. However, things are totally different now with these convenient gadgets.

(12) \_\_\_\_\_ smartphones and tablets \_\_\_\_\_ (welcome) by everyone? The answer is no. In fact, whether they (13) \_\_\_\_\_ (appreciate) by parents highly depends on whether the gadgets (14) \_\_\_\_\_ (apply) properly.



### Vocabulary:

gadget (n.): a small device that does something useful

function (n.): the purpose of something or the job that it does