

# PASSIVE VOICE

{ FORM

We use the **active voice** to say that someone or something DOES something

We use the **passive voice** to say that something is DONE to someone or something (by someone or something else)

In an active sentence the word order is:

SUBJECT + VERB + OBJECT

In a **passive sentence** the word order is reversed:

- a) the object becomes the subject
- b) the verb BE is used in the same tense as the verb in the active sentence
- c) the verb in the active sentence is used in the past participle
- d) the subject becomes agent using the preposition BY

ACTIVE VOICE:

I wrote the letter

PASSIVE VOICE

The letter was written by me

NOTE:

We do not mention the AGENT when:

the agent is unknown:

*A dictionary has been left on my desk . Whose is it?*

We are not interested in the agent:

*New branches are being opened all over the world*

the agent is unknown to us or obvious:

*Students will be given their exam results tomorrow*

we are making a very general comment:

*Surveys are being carried out all the time*

We use the PASSIVE VOICE when:  
the action is more important than the person/thing that did it

*All the tickets have been sold!*

We do not know who or what did it

*The fire engine has been stolen*

It is obvious who or what did it

*My teeth were checked last month*

## VERBS WITH TWO OBJECTS

When an active verb has two objects, we form the passive in **two** ways:

e.g. He gave **the book** to **Alan**

a) **Alan** was given the book

b) **A book** was given **to** Alan

# VERBS FOLLOWED BY A PREPOSITION

Prepositions always follow the  
verb in passive voice

e.g. They put away all the DVDs  
The DVDs were put *away*

# BE or GET

Sometimes, in spoken English, we use **GET** instead of BE to form the passive

e.g. *He **was** taken to hospital last night*

*He **got** taken to hospital last night*

# MAKE

In the active voice the verb make is followed by a **bare infinitive**

e.g. *She made me **do** it again*

BUT

in the passive it is followed by a full infinitive

e.g. *I was made **to do** it*

# PASSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

## WITH REPORTING VERBS

Common reporting verbs such as

**say, believe, consider, know,**

**report, understand, think** may be

followed by either a **personal** or

an **impersonal** construction

# IMPERSONAL CONSTRUCTION

We use **the reporting verb in the passive +that-clause**

e.g. ACTIVE: *People say that she is 23 years old*

PASSIVE: *It is said that she is 23 years old*

# PERSONAL CONSTRUCTION

subject + be + past participle of  
reporting verb + present full infinitive  
to refer to the **PRESENT**

e.g. ACTIVE: *People say she is 23 years old*

PASSIVE: *She is said to be 23 years old*

# PERSONAL CONSTRUCTION

subject + be + past participle of  
reporting verb + present perfect full  
infinitive

to refer to the **PAST**

e.g. **ACTIVE** : People say that he  
lived in Scotland

**PASSIVE**: **He is said to have lived** in  
Scotland

HAVE FUN  
USING THE  
PASSIVE VOICE!!!