

UNIT 4a Grammar: Passive Voice

We form the passive voice by putting the verb **to be** into the same tense as the active verb and adding the past participle of the active verb. The object of the active verb becomes the subject of the passive verb. The subject of the active verb becomes the "agent" of the passive verb and is preceded by "by". The agent is omitted when it is a) a pronoun, b) words like **one, someone, people**, etc, c) **easily understood**. (*Someone destroyed the evidence. → The evidence was destroyed.*) Most transitive verbs can be used in the passive.

Tenses	Active Voice	Passive Voice
Simple Present	<i>The assistant types reports.</i>	<i>Reports are typed (by the assistant).</i>
Simple Past	<i>The assistant typed reports.</i>	<i>Reports were typed (by the assistant).</i>
Present Continuous	<i>The assistant is typing reports.</i>	<i>Reports are being typed (by the assistant).</i>
Past Continuous	<i>The assistant was typing reports.</i>	<i>Reports were being typed (by the assistant).</i>
Present Perfect	<i>The assistant has typed reports.</i>	<i>Reports have been typed (by the assistant).</i>
Past Perfect	<i>The assistant had typed reports.</i>	<i>Reports had been typed (by the assistant).</i>
Simple Future	<i>The assistant will type reports.</i>	<i>Reports will be typed (by the assistant).</i>
Future Perfect	<i>The assistant will have typed reports.</i>	<i>Reports will have been typed (by the assistant).</i>
Conditional	<i>The assistant would type reports.</i>	<i>Reports would be typed (by the assistant).</i>
Conditional Perfect	<i>The assistant would have typed reports.</i>	<i>Reports would have been typed (by the assistant).</i>
Present Infinitive	<i>The assistant ought to type reports.</i>	<i>Reports ought to be typed (by the assistant).</i>
Perfect Infinitive	<i>The assistant ought to have typed reports.</i>	<i>Reports ought to have been typed (by the assistant).</i>
Gerund	<i>The assistant hates people asking her to type reports.</i>	<i>The assistant hates being asked to type reports.</i>
Perfect Gerund	<i>The assistant remembers her boss having asked her to type reports.</i>	<i>The assistant remembers having been asked to type reports. (by her boss)</i>

Notes

- Conversational and informal English often replaces the passive form with an active form with **get**. The **get - passive** is normally used in constructions without an agent.
*Mary **got** hit.*
*He **got** cut.*
- **Have + object + past participle** can be used colloquially to replace a passive verb when we want to talk about an accident or misfortune.
*She **had her leg broken**. (Her leg was broken.)*

Use

The passive voice is used:

- when the person who performs the action ("agent") can easily be understood, or is unknown.
*He **has been arrested**. (=The police have arrested him.)*
*A new government **has been elected** (= easily understood: by the citizens).*
- when it is necessary to express sth more formally.
Some people think the Minister was involved in the conspiracy to overthrow the government. → It is thought that the Minister was involved in the conspiracy to overthrow the government. / The Minister is thought to have been involved in the conspiracy to overthrow the government.
- when we are interested in the **action itself** rather than the person who performs it.
*The new hospital **will be opened** tomorrow (by the Minister of Health).*
- when we mean to be tactful by not naming the agent.
*All my shampoo **has been used**. (instead of: You've used all my shampoo!)*

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FURTHER POINTS ON THE PASSIVE VOICE

- *Make, hear, see, help* are followed by **to + infinitive** in the passive voice.
He made her leave. → *She was made to leave.*
- *Let* becomes *was/were allowed to* in the passive. When the subject of *let* and the object of the infinitive that follows *let* are the same, then *let*, when used in the passive voice, is followed by a **reflexive pronoun + bare passive infinitive**.
She let me go out. → *I was allowed to go out.*
Don't let him tease you. → *Don't let yourself be teased.*
- The passive voice with verbs of reporting such as *assume, believe, consider, feel, know, report, say, think, understand*, etc is formed in two ways. a) **It + passive verb + that - clause** b) **subject + passive verb + to - infinitive**.
They believe she is a spy. → *It is believed that she is a spy.*
They believe she is a spy. → *She is believed to be a spy.*
- Verbs which take two objects such as *allow, ask, give, lend, send*, etc have two passive forms.
He showed me the way to the door. → *I was shown the way to the door.* *The way to the door was shown to me.*
- Passive voice can take **by + agent** or **with + instrument** (a person is involved), **material**, **past participles** (such as *filled, packed* etc).
It was cut with a knife. (by someone)
Ice cream is made with milk.
The stadium was filled with thousands of spectators.
- Verbs followed by a certain preposition take the preposition immediately after them when put into the passive voice.
She accused me of lying. → *I was accused of lying.*
- *Prepositional verbs of movement* when turned into the passive voice change to other synonymous verbs which take no preposition.
Columbus reached/arrived in America in 1492. → *America was reached (NOT arrived in) by Columbus in 1492.*
The royal couple entered/went into the room arm in arm. → *The room was entered (NOT gone into) by the royal couple arm in arm.*
- *Modals* do not change in the passive voice. We change the **active infinitive into passive infinitive**.
They can't repair the building. → *The building can't be repaired.*

1 Turn the following sentences from **active** into **passive**, or vice versa.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 Susan will have redecorated her flat by the end of the month.
.....
..... | 5 Lucy is known to have applied for the manager's position.
.....
..... |
| 2 Which car did the family eventually choose?
.....
..... | 6 Don't let them take advantage of you.
.....
..... |
| 3 The bus timetable is going to change during the summer period.
.....
..... | 7 Will all the new students be made to learn a second language?
.....
..... |
| 4 You must return all books to the library within a week.
.....
..... | 8 He wasn't allowed to leave the premises.
.....
..... |



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- 9 The government department should have sent all the necessary forms.
.....
.....
 - 10 The toddler dislikes being forced to eat breakfast.
.....
.....
 - 11 Peter believes he has left his wallet in his jacket pocket.
.....
.....
 - 12 Don't let the gloomy weather depress you.
.....
.....
 - 13 I just don't like people staring at me.
.....
.....
- 2 Turn the following from **active** into **passive** where necessary.
- 1 When Hilary joined the production team, her manager introduced her to important contacts in the industry, and before long she was promoted to head of department.
.....
.....
.....
 - 2 The shops have lowered their prices for the sales. The difficulty is that the credit card company has cancelled my credit card, so I can't buy anything.
.....
.....
.....
 - 3 Sally says that Harvard University has offered her a place on their Bachelor of Arts course, but she's decided to reject it as Radcliff has admitted her too.
.....
.....
.....
 - 4 Lucy gave me a novel in which someone stole Monet's *Water Lilies* from the National Gallery.
.....
.....
.....
- 5 The ATM withheld my card last night, so now I'll probably get it back on Monday. I just hope the machine doesn't discharge my card over the weekend.
.....
.....
.....
 - 6 Most people believe that the government should do more to protect the local environment. I don't think they are doing enough to encourage people to recycle.
.....
.....
.....
 - 7 From the manner in which the committee spoke of Madeline Adams, you would have thought they were going to promote her, but instead of that they've just dismissed her.
.....
.....
.....
 - 8 It appears they have diagnosed her symptoms as influenza, but they are testing her for suspected pneumonia as well.
.....
.....
.....
 - 9 My car's battery went flat and they had to tow it to a mechanic. I will have to pay for the tow truck charges, but if they have to replace the battery I won't have to pay because the guarantee still covers it.
.....
.....
.....
 - 10 When they appointed Therese as head chef of the restaurant, they gave her permission to add any new dishes, so she may replace their existing menu.
.....
.....
.....

CONVERSATIONAL GRAMMAR

3 Choose the correct item.

- 1 She was anxious for the post of the Personal Assistant to the Director in the recently affiliated Jacobs Sussard Company.
A to select C to be selected
B to have selected D to be selecting
- 2 "Why are the Newtons asking for loan repayment modifications?"
"Because their house in the flood."
A was damaged C had damaged
B damaged D was being damaged
- 3 "How's the new town planning project going?"
"Oh, there's still a lot"
A having done C to be done
B has been done D have done
- 4 "How did his speech go?"
"With all the noise outside, he couldn't himself heard."
A make C be made
B be making D have made
- 5 "Did you hear anything about last month's Barclays' robbery?"
"Yes eventually the robbers given a ten-year sentence."
A were not being C were not to be
B were D were not have been

STRUCTURAL CONVERSION

- 1 *It is said that this poem was written by Elytis.*
This poem was written by Elytis, so it is said.
Elytis is said to have written this poem.
This poem is said to have been written by Elytis.
They say (that) this poem was written by Elytis.
They say that Elytis wrote this poem.
- 2 *Nothing more can be done about this matter.*
There's nothing more to be done about this matter.
With regard to this matter, there's nothing more to be done.
- 3 *Someone fitted her new costume.*
Her new costume was fitted.
She was fitted for her new costume.
She had her new costume fitted.
- 4 *They don't allow speeding in the city.*
Speeding isn't allowed in the city.
Speeding is forbidden in the city.
- 5 *I'd love you to take me out.*
I'd love to be taken out (by you).
- 6 *He lets people laugh at him.*
He lets himself be laughed at.
- 7 *Your contract says that you are to be present by 8 am every day.*
You are expected to be present by 8 am every day, according to your contract.
- 8 *Her story didn't deceive me.*
I wasn't taken in by her story.
- 9 *He wore a hat so that no one would recognise him.*
He wore a hat to avoid being recognised.
- 10 *I love people asking for my autograph.*
I love being asked for my autograph.
I love it when I'm asked for my autograph.
- 11 *They couldn't hear him.*
He couldn't make himself heard.
- 12 *They saw him enter the building.*
He was seen to enter/entering the building.
- 13 *Who made this dress?*
Who was this dress made by?
- 14 *No actor can be expected to remember all the names of the plays he has acted in.*
No one can expect an actor to remember all the plays he has acted in.

4 Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the word given. Do not change the word given. You must use between three and eight words, including the word given.

- 1 She allows her colleagues to take her attention from her work.
distracted
She
..... by her colleagues.
- 2 She locked the door so that nobody would disturb her.
avoid
She
..... disturbed.

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- 3 We can't do much for him now.
little
There now.
- 4 I believe parking is prohibited in this area.
permit
I don't think in this area.
- 5 No student can be expected to know every word in the book.
students
Nobody in the book.
- 6 The agreement states that you are to pay the installment once a month.
according
You to the agreement.
- 7 I don't like it when people I don't know very well ask me personal questions.
being
I people I don't know very well.
- 8 His claim that he didn't know anything didn't deceive me.
taken
I he didn't know anything.
- 9 Using notes is forbidden in this examination.
allowed
Notes in this examination.
- 10 I'd hate them to forget about me.
left
I'd out.
- 11 Allegedly, this book was written by two people.
said
This two people.

CONVERSATIONAL GRAMMAR

5 Choose the correct item.

- 1 "How was your dinner?"
"A great success! Our guests ate the appetizers, the two main courses and the dessert. There was literally nothing"
A to be left C have left
B left D has been left
- 2 "Is there any news about the ex-President?"
"Well, he's reported the country last night."
A to be leaving C to have left
B that he left D to leave
- 3 "What do you think of Umberto Eco's novel *The name of the rose*?"
"Well, it widely regarded as his best, but to tell you the truth I'm not crazy about it."
A has been C is being
B was D is
- 4 "Did you enjoy your graduation ceremony?"
"Oh yes; I didn't like photographed all the time, though."
A being C to have been
B having been D it to be
- 5 "How was your first day in your new job?"
"Extremely embarrassing! We were present ourselves and talk about our previous work experience."
A been asked to C being asked
B asked D asked to

6 Underline the correct item.

- 0 He hates being asked/asking to sign autographs.
- 1 The new wing of the museum will be open/opened tomorrow by the Minister of Culture.
- 2 It is said that the new cinema complex will have been/to be completed by the summer.
- 3 He recalled having/having been severely bitten by insects the last time he was in the area.
- 4 The walls of our classroom were filled with/by colourful pictures.
- 5 This machinery has been wore/worn out by constant use.
- 6 This old house hasn't been lived/lived in for years.
- 7 The author is said that he spent/to have spent a fortune on his new villa.

- 7 Read the text below and think of the word which best fits each space. Use only one word in each space.

ENTERTAINING PEOPLE

When the human capacity (0) for amazement, thrill, and suspense approaches (1) limits, a circus unleashes its clowns (2) freshen the atmosphere and recapture the spectators' mood for the next act. (3) tradition, there are several varieties of clowns, (4) the elegantly-costumed white-faced clown who appears rather severe and domineering, to the happy-go-lucky grotesque variety, (5) exaggerated make-up and costumes are more outrageous and less predictable, to the dejected, down-and-out "tramp" character, popularised (6) all by the American, Emmett Kelly. In 19th century circuses it was usual for clowns to entertain audiences with songs and long monologues, in (7) they sometimes offered words of wisdom (8) politics and current events or quoted Shakespeare. More recently, especially in Russian circuses, a (9) number of clowns have attempted to strike (10) in new directions, abandoning traditional costumes and make-up and developing (11) natural characters. The great Russian clown, Oleg Popov, (12) appear in the ring wearing a minimum (13) make-up and only a slightly unconventional wardrobe. He impersonated an incompetent buffoon (14) was forever trying to mimic the acts of the legitimate performers. Frequently, he almost succeeded – (15) only after sufficient bungling – to make his performance a comedy.

PHRASAL VERBS 1

- 8 Look at Appendix 1 and fill in one of the prepositions or adverbs from the list below, then give a synonym for each phrasal verb.

- about • round • off • across • through
- down to • to • into • out • up • up with
- by • up to • forward • on • over • in
- round to • out in

- 1 They've come our way of thinking at last.

- 2 He came a collection of valuable old coins in the attic.
- 3 How did you come this painting? It's a Picasso, you know.
- 4 This diamond ring came me from my great-grandmother.
- 5 After she was hit on her head by the cricket ball, it took her several minutes to come
- 6 How much did the supermarket bill come this week?
- 7 Did the new play at the National Theatre come your expectations?
- 8 Those tomato seeds I planted in the spring haven't come yet.
- 9 He came several thousand pounds when his grandfather died.
- 10 The party went rather well. Everyone seemed to have enjoyed themselves.
- 11 The students are coming very well in Maths this term.
- 12 It came that Sue's husband had been arrested for speeding.
- 13 I don't know what's come him; he's been acting very oddly lately.
- 14 He came a rash after eating a kilo of strawberries.
- 15 Her latest novel is coming in paperback soon.
- 16 Long hair for men is coming again. More and more men are starting to wear their hair long.
- 17 After the flood, hundreds of volunteers came with offers of assistance.
- 18 We don't know yet how we'll solve the problem but I'm sure someone will come a solution soon.
- 19 Most of the companies which managed to come the economic crisis are now operating very successfully.
- 20 I'm not sure how the accident came but I suspect somebody was being careless.