PASSIVE VOICE

We use passive voice when:

1. The identity of the person performing the action is obvious

2. We don’t know (exactly) who performed the action

3. The subject of the active verb would be the general term **people**

4. We are interested in the action rather than in the person performing it

5. The speaker wants to avoid being associated with or held personally responsible for the action

Forming the passive voice:

The object of the active verb becomes the subject, the verb **to be** is put into the same tense or verb form as the active voice verb, the past participle of the active verb follows the verb **to** **be**,and the subject of the active verb either becomes the agent preceded by **by,** or it is not mentioned.

TENSES OF THE VERB **to be**

Plans **are** made every day

Plans **are being** made now

Plans **were** made last week

Plans **were being** made all day

Plans **have been** made

Plans **had been** made

Plans **will be** made

Plans **will have been** made by tonight

Plans **must be** made

Plans **ought to have been** made

They like plans **being** made

They want plans **to be** made

They want plans **to have been** made

REPORTING VERBS IN THE PASSIVE VOICE

Reporting verbs (**say, believe, consider, think,** etc) are often expressed in the passive voice. This may be done **impersonally** or **personally**.

Ex.1. People say that he is lazy. (ACTIVE)

It is said that he is lazy. (PASSIVE, IMPERSONAL-EMPHASIS ON THE STATEMENT)

He is said to be lazy. (PASSIVE PERSONAL- EMPHASIS ON THE PERSON OR THING)

Ex.2. They say that it was a difficult decision.

It is said that it was a difficult decision.

It is said to have been a difficult decision.

Ex.3. They think Sue is working too hard.

It is thought that Sue is working too hard.

Sue is thought to be working too hard.

SEE, HEAR, HELP, MAKE

The bare infinitive following *see, hear, help, make*, becomes a full infinitive after the passive voice.

EX. They saw him take the money

He was seen to take the money

They heard her accuse him

She was heard to accuse him

They helped him (to) get a lawyer

He was helped to get a lawyer

She made him admit his guilt

He was made to admit his guilt

NOTE:

For **see** and **hear** we could also write the following:

*He was seen taking the money*

*She was heard accusing him*

LET

It is often best to replace **let** with **permitted** or **allowed** in the passive where **let** simply involves **permission**

They let her drive the car

She was allowed/permitted to drive the car. (Permission)

They let her go

She was let go. (Release)

*GET* IN THE PASSIVE

People sometimes use **get** instead of **be** in the passive when speaking informally.

*I was/got shouted at when I pointed out the mistake.*

**EXERCISES**

1. I love people giving me presents

2. What did he tell you to do?

3. Tesco are converting the old bank into a supermarket

4. Why have they given him a promotion?

5. Oxfam will hold a fashion show next week

6. Does the school provide accommodation for all new students?

7. Who interviewed Gilbert?

8. They say she lied to the police

9. They expect the plane will be landing soon

10. They will have settled the matter by this afternoon

11. Fire has completely destroyed the left wing of the plane

12. Don’t you object to people asking you for favors all the time?

13. You have to wear safety helmets all the time

14. We have not yet finalized details for the wedding

15. They thought he had been brave to do so

16. Most people think that broken homes cause a lot of social problems

17. She saw them go out

18. Everyone heard her shouting at the students

19. When did they demolish the building?

20. He objects to people telling him what to do