

Unit 10A
Grammar: The Passive Voice



This is a photograph of my dog Charlie. He is a Rhodesian Ridgeback, and is now 3 years old. He is extremely intelligent, and has learnt to open the fridge and help himself to whatever he wants to eat, something he has been doing a lot recently late at night, so much so, that we have had to install a lock.

~~Someone~~ trained my dog Charlie to protect the house.

- It is not important who trained Charlie
- It is obvious that it was "someone"
- We don't know who trained Charlie

*This is the most important thing.
This is what I'm taking about.*

My dog Charlie was trained to protect the house.

*This is now the subject
of the sentence.*

Why do we use the passive voice?

We use the passive when we want to show that the person/thing ***experiencing*** the action, is **more important** than who or what is performing the action. (the subject)

So, in the passive voice, **the most important thing or person becomes the subject of the sentence.**

example (1):

The computer will be repaired tomorrow.

We are only interested in **the computer**, and when it is going to be repaired, **NOT** who is going to repair it.

example (2):

The products are being transported using trucks.

We are only interested in **the products**, and how they are going to be transported, **NOT** who is going to transport them.

example (3):

The new students were given a map of the university campus.

We are only interested in **the new students**, and the maps of the university campus, **NOT** who gave the students the maps.

Task 10.1

Below are the **passive** example sentences from the introduction, and a few extras. Transform the sentences into their **active** forms by **creating** a subject who/that performs the action.

For example:

Safety barriers will be installed in the factory.

They will install safety barriers in the factory.

1. *The computer will be repaired tomorrow.*

2. *The products are being transported using trucks.*

3. *The new students were given a map of the university campus.*

4. *Maggie has been taken to school.*

5. *They haven't been educated about the dangers of smoking.*

Task 10.1

Below are the **passive** example sentences from the introduction, and a few extras. Transform the sentences into their **active** forms by **creating** a subject who/that performs the action.

For example:

Safety barriers will be installed in the factory.

They will install safety barriers in the factory.

1. *The computer will be repaired tomorrow.*

The technician will repair the computer tomorrow.

2. *The products are being transported using trucks.*

They are transporting the products using trucks.

3. *The new students were given a map of the university campus.*

A teacher gave the new students a map of the university campus.

4. *Maggie has been taken to school.*

John took Maggie to school.

5. *They haven't been educated about the dangers of smoking.*

Nobody/no one has educated them about the dangers of smoking.

The Passive Voice: **Structure**

We form the passive by using the appropriate tense of **be** + **past participle**:

present simple	Bread is made with flour.
present continuous	The bread is being made now.
past simple	The bread was made this morning.
past continuous	The bread was being made while I was out collecting supplies.
present perfect	The bread has been made .
past perfect	The bread had been made by the time I arrived back to the restaurant.
future (will)	The bread will be made in the morning.
future (going to)	The bread is going to be made in the morning.
future perfect	The bread will have been made by 9am.
modals	The bread should have been made this morning. (The bread must be made early.)
-ing	The bread is being eaten now.
present infinitive	The bread is to be made first thing in the morning.

The Passive Voice: Notes

1. We can still add secondary information to our passive form (if we want to), by adding **by**:

My car was damaged.

*My car was damaged **by** the hail storm yesterday.*

The guests are being entertained.

*The guests are being entertained **by** the live musicians.*

2. We use reporting verbs such as *consider*, *believe*, *think*, *say*, *claim* for **passive generalisations**:

- a. **without** a subject, we use **it**: (it + be + verb (+ that))

***It is believed** that the number thirteen is unlucky in many western countries.*

***It is considered** rude to arrive late to a wedding.*

***It is said** that the old Manson house is haunted.*

- b. **with** a subject (subject + be + verb + infinitive)

***The young scientist is thought to be** very innovative.*

***Nicola Sterns is considered to be** the best person for the job.*

***Australian snakes are claimed to be** the most poisonous in the world.*

Task 10.2

Complete the second sentence, so that it has the same meaning as the first, but **in the passive voice**. Do not use more than five words to fill the gaps.

1. Teachers require the students to watch an educational video on the new subject.

The students _____ an educational video on the new subject.

2. My bank manager is signing the document as we speak.

The document _____ as we speak.

3. Many people will be celebrating the football team's victory in the streets tonight!

The football team's victory _____ in the streets tonight.

4. People have been giving out emergency medical supplies to the villagers.

Emergency medical supplies _____ to the villagers.

5. In India, people believe that cows are holy.

In India, _____ that cows are holy.

6. Someone has stolen my bicycle from outside the supermarket.

My bicycle _____ from outside the supermarket.

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Complete the second sentence, so that it has the same meaning as the first, but **in the passive voice**. Do not use more than five words to fill the gaps.

1. Teachers require the students to watch an educational video on the new subject.

The students are required to watch an educational video on the new subject.

2. My bank manager is signing the document as we speak.

The document is being signed as we speak.

3. Many people will be celebrating the football team's victory in the streets tonight!

The football team's victory will be celebrated in the streets tonight. *(is going to be celebrated)*

4. People have been giving out emergency medical supplies to the villagers.

Emergency medical supplies have been given out to the villagers.

5. In India, people believe that cows are holy.

In India, it is believed that cows are holy.

6. Someone has stolen my bicycle from outside the supermarket.

My bicycle has been stolen from outside the supermarket.