

Passive 1 (is done / was done)

A

Study this example:



This house **was built** in 1961.

Was built is *passive*.

Compare active and passive:

Somebody **built** this house in 1961. (*active*)
subject object

This house **was built** in 1961. (*passive*)
subject

When we use an active verb, we say *what the subject does*:

- My grandfather was a builder. **He built** this house in 1961.
- It's a big company. **It employs** two hundred people.

When we use a passive verb, we say *what happens to the subject*:

- 'How old is this house?' '**It was built** in 1961.'
- Two hundred people are employed** by the company.

B

When we use the passive, who or what causes the action is often unknown or unimportant:

- A lot of money **was stolen** in the robbery. (somebody stole it, but we don't know who)
- Is this room cleaned** every day? (does somebody clean it? – it's not important who)

If we want to say who does or what causes the action, we use **by**:

- This house was built **by my grandfather**.
- Two hundred people are employed **by the company**.

C

The passive is **be (is/was etc.) + past participle (done/cleaned/seen etc.)**:

(be) done (be) cleaned (be) damaged (be) built (be) seen etc.

For irregular past participles (**done/seen/known** etc.), see Appendix 1.

Study the active and passive forms of the *present simple* and *past simple*:

Present simple

active **clean(s) / see(s)** etc.

Somebody **cleans** this room every day.

passive **am/is/are + cleaned/seen** etc.

This room **is cleaned** every day.

- Many accidents **are caused** by careless driving.
- I'm **not invited** to parties very often.
- How **is** this word **pronounced**?

Past simple

active **cleaned/saw** etc.

Somebody **cleaned** this room yesterday.

passive **was/were + cleaned/seen** etc.

This room **was cleaned** yesterday.

- We **were woken** up by a loud noise during the night.
- 'Did you go to the party?' 'No, I **wasn't invited**.'
- How much money **was stolen** in the robbery?

Exercises

42.1 Complete the sentences using one of these verbs in the correct form, present or past:

- | | | | | |
|----------|--------|----------|-----------|-------|
| cause | damage | hold | invite | make |
| overtake | show | surround | translate | write |

- Many accidents are caused by dangerous driving.
- Cheese _____ from milk.
- The roof of the building _____ in a storm a few days ago.
- You _____ to the wedding. Why didn't you go?
- A cinema is a place where films _____.
- In the United States, elections for president _____ every four years.
- Originally the book _____ in Spanish, and a few years ago it _____ into English.
- Although we were driving fast, we _____ by a lot of other cars.
- You can't see the house from the road. It _____ by trees.

42.2 Write questions using the passive. Some are present and some are past.

- Ask about glass. (how / make?) How is glass made?
- Ask about television. (when / invent?) _____
- Ask about mountains. (how / form?) _____
- Ask about antibiotics. (when / discover?) _____
- Ask about silver. (what / use for?) _____

42.3 Put the verb into the correct form, present simple or past simple, active or passive.

- It's a big factory. Five hundred people are employed (employ) there.
- Did somebody clean (somebody / clean) this room yesterday?
- Water _____ (cover) most of the earth's surface.
- How much of the earth's surface _____ (cover) by water?
- The park gates _____ (lock) at 6.30 p.m. every evening.
- The letter _____ (send) a week ago and it (arrive) _____ yesterday.
- The boat hit a rock and _____ (sink) quickly. Fortunately everybody _____ (rescue).
- Robert's parents _____ (die) when he was very young. He and his sister _____ (bring up) by their grandparents.
- I was born in London, but I _____ (grow up) in Canada.
- While I was on holiday, my camera _____ (steal) from my hotel room.
- While I was on holiday, my camera _____ (disappear) from my hotel room.
- Why _____ (Sue / resign) from her job? Didn't she enjoy it?
- Why _____ (Ben / fire) from his job? Did he do something wrong?
- The company is not independent. It _____ (own) by a much larger company.
- I saw an accident last night. Somebody _____ (call) an ambulance but nobody _____ (injure), so the ambulance _____ (not / need).
- Where _____ (these pictures / take)? In London? _____ (you / take) them, or somebody else?
- Sometimes it's quite noisy living here, but it's not a problem for me – I _____ (not / bother) by it.

42.4 Rewrite these sentences. Instead of using **somebody, they, people** etc., write a passive sentence.

- Somebody cleans the room every day. The room is cleaned every day.
- They cancelled all flights because of fog. All _____
- People don't use this road much. _____
- Somebody accused me of stealing money. I _____
- How do people learn languages? How _____
- People warned us not to go out alone. _____