



ENGLISH WITH NIMAFAR

PASSIVE VOICE

Overview:

- The Passive Voice is an intermediate Grammar topic
- At the end of this lesson, you will be able to use passive sentences in your daily conversations.

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How many Voices do we have?

We have two voices in English.

- Active Voice
- Passive Voice

What is The Active Voice?

When the sentence has the following structure, it is considered "Active"

Subject	Verb	Object	Others...
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Examples:

- Sarah plays soccer.
- LeBron James is an NBA player.
- Simon Baker is an actor.
- Jack washes his car.
- Somebody stole my wallet.

What is The Passive Voice?

When the subject is either unknown, unimportant or not mentioned. Or when the focus of the sentence is on **the object**.

The Structure:

Passive in simple tenses	Object	Modal Verbs (optional)	Am/Is/Are/Was/Were	Verb (P.P)	(By Subject(Agent))
Passive in perfect tenses	Object	Modal Verbs (Optional)	Have been/Has been/Had been	Verb (P.P)	(By Subject(Agent))
Passive in continuous tenses	Object	Modal Verbs (Optional)	[Be] being (e.g is being, were being, had been being)	Verb (P.P)	(By Subject(Agent))

Basic Examples

- The pizza is eaten by David.
- My car was stolen last night.
- A mistake was made.
- We are invited to a party.
- Her bag had been stolen before we arrived.

3 reasons why we use the Passive Voice

There are 3 main reasons why we use the passive voice.

1. When we don't know the subject.
2. When the subject is not important.
3. When we want to avoid the responsibility we were given and/or we don't want others to know about the subject ([Advanced note](#))

Generally, in the passive voice, the focus is on the object of the active sentence. Take a look at the example below:

- David washed the car yesterday. => The car was washed yesterday by David.

Subject: David, Object: the car

Transitive VS Intransitive

Some verbs are transitive, means they do need an object while others don't need object so they are called intransitive.

We cannot make passive sentences with intransitive verbs because there is no object to focus on.

Some transitive verbs:

- Eat (e.g. "I ate the sandwich.")
- Write (e.g. "She wrote a letter.")
- Throw (e.g. "He threw the ball.")
- Read (e.g. "We read the book.")
- Cook (e.g. "She cooked dinner.")
- Love (e.g. "He loved his dog.")
- Paint (e.g. "She painted the wall.")
- Sing (e.g. "They sang a song.")
- Buy (e.g. "He bought a new car.")
- Play (e.g. "They played a game")
- etc.

Some intransitive verbs:

- Walk (e.g. "He walked to the store.")
- Laugh (e.g. "She laughed at the joke.")
- Sleep (e.g. "They slept on the couch.")
- Cry (e.g. "He cried after the movie.")
- Run (e.g. "She ran in the marathon.")
- Swim (e.g. "He swims every day.")
- Happen (e.g. "She sings in the choir.")
- Sit (e.g. "He sat on the bench.")
- Stand (e.g. "She stands at the bus stop.")
- Dance (e.g. "They danced all night.")
- etc.

Note: The verb "run", if we mean as "launching", "managing" etc... then it is transitive.

- She runs multiple companies. => Multiple companies are run by her.

Conjugation

The verb "be" is explained in how and when shall be used in different styles:

Simple Tenses (e.g. Present Simple)	Am/Is/Are/Was/Were	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• My wallet was stolen• The car is washed.• They were killed.
Perfect Tenses (e.g. Past Perfect)	Have been/Has been/Had been	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It has been solved.• You have been fired.• We had been sentenced to death
Continuous Tenses (e.g. Present Continuous)	Is being/Are being/Am being/Was being/Were Being	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The car is being washed.• Soldiers are being killed.
Perfect Continuous Tenses (e.g. Present Perfect Continuous)	Have been being/Has been being/Had been being	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The car has been being repaired since last morning.• The dishes have been being washed by the machine for an hour.

Negation

We simply add "not" to the verb "be" so as to make our passive sentences, negative.

- The car is washed => The car **isn't** washed.
- The dishes have been being washed => The dishes **haven't** been being washed.
- They were invited. => They **weren't** invited.

When we have modals verbs in our passive sentences, we just negate the modal verb. (Should be => Should not/Shouldn't be)

But when don't have modal verbs, we negate the verb "be".

Example:

- The car **should be** washed ASAP. => The car **shouldn't be** washed ASAP.
- They **will be** sentenced to death. => They **won't be** sentenced to death.
- The class **might be** postponed. => The class **mightn't/might not be** postponed.

Interrogative Sentences in Passive

In order to make questions, if we have modal verbs, we make questions with the modal verb. Or if we don't have modal verbs, we make questions with the verb "be".

Example:

- The car should be washed now. => Should the car be washed now?
- My wallet **was** stolen. => **Was** your wallet stolen?

Sometimes it is obvious!

Sometimes in passive sentences, it is obvious who the subject is. Because that subject is the only person/thing that can do the action.

Examples:

- I was fined for crossing a red light => Only a police officer can fine drivers for crossing a red light.
- The menu has been brought. => Only a waiter/waitress brings the menu.

But sometimes it is not clear.

- The car is now fixed. => Who fixed it?
- The room has been cleaned. => Who cleaned it?
- The clothes are washed. => Who/What washed them? (Maybe a machine or a person)

Note: The topic above is mentioned when we do care about the subject.

Let's use Get instead of Be!

The verb "get" can be used instead of the verb "be" if and only if our next verb is active. We can NOT use "get + stative verbs" so as to make passive sentences. Actually, this structure does not make sense and it is not used in English. We use get-passive to talk about a negative or undesirable event. Also, we can use reflexive pronouns to indicate the subject is partly responsible for the event.

Examples:

- The car got washed by the mechanic yesterday.
- The wallet got stolen.
- She got fired!
- They got themselves killed by insulting the King.
- What you went through cannot be imagined. (NOT ~~cannot get imagined~~)

Let's get deeper into the agent

The agent (by subject) can be a pronoun, name or noun clause.

- The car has been fixed by **a group of mechanics who work for free.**
- The flowers are watered by **Jack.**
- The room is cleaned by **him.**

Other uses of The Passive Voice

1. **Scientific articles:**

- Oxygen is consumed during the process of respiration in animals and humans.
- Chlorophyll is used by plants during the process of photosynthesis to produce glucose.

2. **Newspapers:**

- Suspect (Got) Arrested in Connection to Murder of Local Business Owner.
- Victim (Is) Identified in Homicide Investigation, Police Urge Public for Information.

Examples

1. The new tax law is being debated by lawmakers in Congress.
2. The Mona Lisa had been painted by Leonardo da Vinci in the 16th century.
3. The city's infrastructure had been severely damaged by the earthquake last year.
4. The contract will be signed by the parties involved next week.
5. The new software update had been thoroughly tested by the development team before release.
6. The research project is being funded by a government grant.
7. The company's new headquarters will be built by a team of architects and engineers.
8. The stolen artwork was recovered by police after a lengthy investigation.
9. The proposal had been rejected by the board of directors due to insufficient funding.
10. The ancient ruins were being studied by a team of archaeologists from around the world.
11. Will the new policy be implemented by the end of the year?
12. Has the project been completed by the deadline?
13. Was the report written by the intern or the team leader?
14. Will the equipment be delivered by the supplier or a third-party logistics company?
15. Has the document been reviewed by legal counsel yet?
16. Was the mistake made by the employee or the supervisor?
17. Will the proposal be considered by the board of directors at their next meeting?
18. Has the contract been signed by both parties involved?
19. Was the recipe developed by the chef or a consultant?
20. Will the event be attended by the keynote speaker or a substitute?
21. Let the data be analyzed by the experts.
22. Have the document translated by a certified professional.
23. Make sure the equipment is properly maintained and cleaned.
24. Let the building be inspected by a licensed engineer.
25. Ensure that the project is completed on time and within budget.
26. The problem was not caused by the server but by an issue with the software.
27. The contract was not signed by the client, due to a dispute over the terms.
28. The mistake was not made by the engineer but by a miscommunication from management.
29. The research proposal was not approved by the grant committee, due to insufficient data.
30. The prize was not won by the favorite but by an underdog outsider.