

The Passive Voice



The Passive Voice is used

- when the agent (the person who does the action) is unknown, unimportant or obvious from the context. *The door **had been locked**.* (we don't know who locked it – unknown agent) *Repairs **are being made** to the car.* (by the mechanic – obvious agent)
- when we are interested more in the action than the person who carries it out, such as in news reports, formal notices, instructions, processes, headlines, advertisements, etc. *The whole area **was evacuated**.* (news report) *Breakfast **is served** from 6.00 to 10.30.* (formal notice)
- to make statements more formal or polite. *"My new dress **has been ruined**".* (more polite than saying "You ruined my dress").
- to put emphasis on the agent. *The Pyramids were built **by the ancient Egyptians**.*

	subject	verb	object
active	<i>The mayor</i>	<i>opened</i>	<i>the new school.</i>

	subject	verb	agent
passive	<i>The new school</i>	<i>was opened</i>	<i>by the mayor.</i>

Note

We **can't** make passive forms from verbs which do not have objects (intransitive verbs):

e.g. The parcel arrived in the post this morning.

Not: ~~The parcel was arrived~~



To be in the appropriate tense + the Past Participle of the main verb

	Active Voice	Passive Voice
Present Simple	They serve dinner at 6:00.	Dinner is served at 6:00.
Present Continuous	They are serving dinner now.	Dinner is being served now.
Past Simple	They served dinner.	Dinner was served .
Past Continuous	They were serving dinner.	Dinner was being served .
Future Simple	They will serve dinner.	Dinner will be served .
Present Perfect	They have served dinner.	Dinner has been served .
Past Perfect	They had served dinner.	Dinner had been served .
Future Perfect	They will have served dinner.	Dinner will have been served .
Present infinitive	They should serve dinner.	Dinner should be served .
Perfect infinitive	They should have served dinner.	Dinner should have been served .
-ing form	He likes people serving his dinner.	He likes his dinner being served .
Perfect -ing form	Having served dinner, ...	Dinner having been served , ...
Modals + be + p.p.	You must serve dinner.	Dinner must be served .

Personal and Impersonal Passive Active Voice

They say that women live longer than men.

▣ Personal Passive

Women are said to live longer than men.

▣ Impersonal Passive

It is said that women live longer than men.



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have + object + the Past Participle

Present Simple *I have my computer upgraded once a year.*

Present Continuous *I am having my computer upgraded at the moment.*

Past Simple *I had my computer upgraded last month.*

Past Continuous *I was having my computer upgraded last week.*

Future Simple *I will have my computer upgraded next Monday.*

Future Continuous *At 5 o'clock tomorrow I will be having my computer upgraded.*

Present Perfect *I have just had my computer upgraded.*

Present Perfect Continuous *I have been having my computer upgraded since this morning.*

Past Perfect *I had had my computer upgraded before I left work yesterday.*

Note

The Causative Form is also used

When something bad happens, especially when someone is affected by an action which they did not cause.

e.g. They've had their car stolen.

e.g. Hundreds of people had their homes destroyed by the hurricane.

