

## 10.2 The passive

- 1 We can often say a sentence in two ways, depending on what we want to focus on. If we want to focus on the **person who did the action**, we use the **active**.
- 2 If we want to focus on the person or thing the **action happened to**, we use the **passive**.

main focus

active verb

1 Europeans **discovered** chocolate when they first went to the Americas.

2 Chocolate **was discovered** by Europeans when they first went to the Americas.

main focus

passive verb

## 10.2 The passive

1 We form the **passive** with the verb *be* and the **past participle**.

Subject	<i>be</i>	Past participle	
Ice cream	is	made	with milk.
Strawberries	aren't	grown	in all countries.
Tea	was	drunk	in Asia a long time ago.
Children	weren't	given	vitamins when I was young.

2 Notice how the **subject** and **object change** in *active* and *passive* sentences.

The French invented tin cans.

~~Tin cans were invented by the French.~~

We call the subject **the agent** in passive sentences.

When we mention the agent, we use *by*.

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1 We often use the *passive* when we **don't know who** the *agent* is, when the *agent* is **already obvious**, or when the *agent* is **not important** for the action.

1 Millions of highly polluting cars **are manufactured** every year.

Who makes the cars  
is not important.

2 The criminals **were arrested** last night.

We all know who  
arrests criminals.

3 Several paintings **were stolen** last year. The police are still looking for the thieves.

We don't know who  
stole the paintings.



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1 Change these *active* sentences into the *passive*. You do not need to include an agent.

1 We throw away thousands of tonnes of food every year.

Thousands of tonnes of food are thrown away every year.

2 Someone invented the tin opener over fifty years after the tin can!

The tin opener was invented over fifty years after the tin can!

3 In the western world, people waste too much food.

Too much food is wasted in the western world.

4 People transport a lot of food around the world.

A lot of food is transported around the world.

5 People in the UK eat a lot of international dishes.

A lot of international dishes are eaten in the UK.