

## Forming passive sentences 1

Reminder → Section D & Appendix 2

**A** Verbs such as **give** take both a direct object (DO) and an indirect object (IO) in two patterns: **V + IO + DO** or **V + DO + preposition + IO**. These verbs have two corresponding passives:

active	V + IO + DO V + DO + prep + IO	passive
Alice gave us that vase. ✓		We were given that vase (by Alice). ✓
Alice gave that vase to us. ✓		That vase was given (to) us (by Alice). ✓

Also: **award, hand, lend, offer, send, throw** (= 'giving' verbs); **ask, read, teach** (= 'telling' verbs)

The passive form you choose depends on which is more appropriate in a particular context. If we specify an agent (see Appendix 2), this follows **by** at the end of the clause. Note that in informal contexts 'to' can be left out in the second passive pattern.

Verbs that can't be followed by **IO + DO** in the active have only one of these passive forms:

active	V + DO + prep + IO	passive
<del>He explained me the problem.</del> X	He explained the problem to me. ✓	<del>I was explained the problem.</del> X The problem was explained to me. ✓

Also: **announce, demonstrate, describe, introduce, mention, propose, report, suggest** (= 'reporting' verbs)

**B** Verbs followed by **object + complement** in the active have one passive form:

active	V + object + complement	passive
They elected her president.		She was elected president.

Also: **appoint, declare, make, nominate, vote** (to do with giving a particular position); **call, name, title** (= 'naming' verbs)

**C** Some verbs that are followed by **object + bare infinitive** (= an infinitive without 'to') in the active are followed by a **to-infinitive** in the passive:

active	V + object + bare infinitive	passive
They have made him return the money.		He has been made to return the money.

Also: **feel, hear, help** (also + object + **to-infinitive**), **observe, see** (see also Unit 23A)

**D** **Transitive two- and three-word verbs** (see also Unit 94)

Some have passive forms:

active	passive
Ella <b>looked after</b> him.	He was looked after (by Ella).

Also: **carry out** (= put into practice), **disapprove of, hold over** (= delay), **talk down to** (= patronise)

Some are not used in the passive:

active	no passive
We <b>came up against</b> a problem.	<del>A problem was come up against.</del> X

Also: **brush up on** (= revise), **cast (your mind) back** (= try to remember), **get (something) down** (= write), **take after** (= resemble)

Some can be only used in the passive with certain senses:

active	passive
They <b>put out</b> the fire. I <b>put out</b> a hand to steady myself.	The fire was put out. <del>A hand was put out to steady myself.</del> X

Also: (passive possible meaning / no passive meaning): **call (someone) up** (order to join the army / telephone); **call (someone) back** (ask to return / telephone); **let in** (allow into a place / allow rain, etc. in); **let out** (allow to leave / let out a sound)

# Exercises

**22.1** Rewrite the sentences using one or, if possible, two passive forms. Look carefully at the tense. **A**

- 1 Someone handed me a note. *I was handed a note. / A note was handed to me.*
- 2 Someone offered her a second-hand bicycle.
- 3 Someone has proposed improvements to the developers.
- 4 Someone suggested some interesting changes to me.
- 5 Someone awarded him a prize.
- 6 Someone will announce the President's arrival to the waiting journalists.
- 7 Someone had mentioned the password to the thieves.
- 8 Someone has lent me some skis.
- 9 Someone is sending me a lot of spam emails.
- 10 Someone is going to explain the changes to the students.

**22.2** Complete each first sentence with a suitable form of a verb from the box. Then complete the second sentence using the same verb and the passive. **A, B & C**

appoint    declare    demonstrate    ~~help~~    introduce    see

- 1 People *helped* Rob to his feet after the accident.  
*Rob was helped to his feet after the accident.*
- 2 Tony ..... me to Mrs Rossi at his birthday party. I .....
- 3 Has anyone ..... Chris this morning? *Has Chris* .....
- 4 They ..... Sven Larsen Regional Sales Director for Scandinavia.  
*Sven Larsen* .....
- 5 I am certain that Sarah ..... her suitability as company director to those who still have any doubt. *I am certain that Sarah's suitability as company director* .....
- 6 They ..... Alan Watson winner of the election after a recount.  
*Alan Watson* .....

**22.3** If possible, rewrite each sentence using a passive form of the italicised two- or three-word verb. If not, write 'No passive'. **D**

- 1 Children often *look up to* strict teachers.  
*Strict teachers are often looked up to by children.*
- 2 The company *phased out* the product over a period of three years.  
.....
- 3 The students *got* the information *down* as fast as they could.  
.....
- 4 The decision has *deprived* many people *of* the right to vote.  
.....
- 5 People often *brush up on* a foreign language just before a holiday.  
.....
- 6 Ben *called* Mrs Patel *back* as soon as he got home.  
.....
- 7 The chairperson *held over* the last two items until the next committee meeting.  
.....
- 8 The farmer *prevented* walkers *from* crossing the field after he *fenced* it *off*.  
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