Passive (1) *(is done / was done)*

A

Study this example:

This house **was built** in 1930.

Was built is *passive*. Compare *active* and *passive*:

Somebody **built** this house in 1930. *(active)*
subject / object

This house **was built** in 1930. *(passive)*
subject

We use an active verb to say what the subject does:
- My grandfather was a builder. He **built** this house in 1930.
- It's a big company. It **employs** two hundred people.

We use a passive verb to say what happens to the subject:
- This house is quite old. It **was built** in 1930.
- 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*.)

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/have been, etc.) + the *past participle* (done/cleaned/seen, etc.):
(be) done   (be) cleaned   (be) seen   (be) damaged   (be) built, etc.
For irregular past participles (done/known/seen, etc.), see Appendix 1.

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

Simple present

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 often **invited** to parties.
- How **is** this word **pronounced**?

Simple past

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**?

Passive Units 40–41   **By** Unit 124C

Exercises

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

~~cause~~   damage   find   hold   include   invite   make   show   translate   write

1. Many accidents _are caused_ by dangerous driving.
2. Cheese _____ from milk.
3. The roof of the building _____ in a storm a few days ago.
4. You don't have to leave a tip. Service _____ in the bill.
5. You _____ to the wedding. Why didn't you go?
6. A movie theater is a place where movies _____ .
7. In the United States, elections for President _____ every four years.
8. Originally the book _____ in Spanish, and a few years ago it _____ into English.
9. My keys _____ in the parking lot at the mall.

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

1. Ask about the telephone. (when / invent?) _When was the telephone invented?_
2. Ask about glass. (how / make?) How _____ ?
3. Ask about the planet Pluto. (when / discover?) _____
4. Ask about silver. (what / use for?) _____
5. Ask about television. (when / invent?) _____

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

1. It's a big factory. Five hundred people _are employed_ (employ) there.
2. Water _____ (cover) most of the Earth's surface.
3. Most of the Earth's surface _____ (cover) by water.
4. The park gates _____ (lock) at 6:30 every evening.
5. The letter _____ (mail) a week ago, and it _____ (arrive) yesterday.
6. Ron's parents _____ (die) when he was very young. He and his sister _____ (bring up) by their grandparents.
7. I was born in Chicago, but I _____ (grow up) in Houston.
8. While I was on vacation, my camera _____ (steal) from my hotel room.
9. While I was on vacation, my camera _____ (disappear) from my hotel room.
10. Why _____ (Sue / resign) from her job? Didn't she like it?
11. Why _____ (Bill / fire) from his job? What did he do wrong?
12. The business is not independent. It _____ (own) by a much larger company.
13. I saw an accident last night. Somebody _____ (call) an ambulance, but nobody _____ (injure), so the ambulance _____ (not / need).
14. Where _____ (these pictures / take)? In Hong Kong? _____ (you / take) them?

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

1. Somebody cleans the room every day. _The room is cleaned every day._
2. They canceled all flights because of fog. All _____ .
3. People don't use this road very often. _____
4. Somebody accused me of stealing money. I _____ .
5. How do people learn languages? How _____ ?
6. People warned us not to go out alone. _____