

Passive Voice: Review

FORM *be* + past participle

USE Most verbs have active and passive forms. With the **passive voice**, the auxiliary *be* indicates the verb tense and whether the verb is singular/plural and affirmative/negative.

The passive voice is usually used instead of the active voice:

- when the agent (“doer” of the action) is unknown, unimportant or obvious
- to stress the receiver of the action, not the agent
- to make general statements or explanations

In passive sentences, we usually, leave out the “by” phrase unless:

- the agent is unexpected or surprising
- the agent is important or famous
- including the agent provides extra information

“*Get*” can be used as the passive auxiliary instead of “*be*” in informal or spoken English:

- with animate subjects, to emphasize the action rather than the state or when something happened unexpectedly or suddenly

The following are some examples of the passive voice:

Past Perfect *The apartment had been painted before we moved in.*

Past Continuous *Janet went shopping while her car was being fixed.*

Simple Past *The light bulb was invented by Thomas Edison.
Buttons were used by most primitive societies.*

Present Perfect *Dinosaur bones have been found in Alberta.*

Simple Present *The castle is built of stone.
The windows in my condo are washed every six months.*

Present Continuous *My house is being renovated so I’m staying with friends.*

Future *We hope that a cure for cancer will be discovered.*

Modals *Her idea might be accepted if she makes a good presentation*

This project should be finished by Friday.

“Get” Passive *Jan got hit by a car.
They will get married next Saturday.*

Decide whether the ACTIVE or PASSIVE sentence is more suitable in each situation below.

Explain.

1. a. This computer was made in Japan.
b. A factory in Japan made this computer.
2. a. A new job was started by Rick last week.
b. Rick started a new job last week.
3. a. My car was stolen yesterday.
b. A thief stole my car yesterday.
4. a. Pierre Trudeau was first elected prime minister of Canada in 1968.
b. Canadians first elected Pierre Trudeau prime minister in 1968.
5. a. Wine got spilled on the new white carpet.
b. Someone spilled wine on the new white carpet.

Complete with the ACTIVE or PASSIVE of the verbs provided. Use suitable tenses.

1. Most of Canada's wheat _____ (grow) in the Prairies.
2. I think the Toronto Blue Jays _____ (win) the World Series next year.
3. Paulette _____ (hire) as a computer consultant.
4. My car is at the mechanic's right now. The brakes _____ (fix).
5. The "Space Arm" for the Space Shuttle _____ (design) in Canada.
6. Yesterday, the students _____ (watch) a movie about hockey.
7. Hybrid cars, which use gas and electricity, _____ (become) cheaper.
8. Public schools and universities _____ (support) by the government.
9. That big house _____ (buy) by a rich lawyer.
10. My dog _____ (find) the neighbour's cat in my yard yesterday. While the cat _____ (chase) by my dog, it _____ (jump) onto the roof.
11. Niagara Falls _____ (visit) by millions of tourists.