

## Passive Voice: Complex Passives

### FORM

*It + passive + that clause*  
*or*  
**Subject + passive + to infinitive clause**  
(other than *It*)

### USE

The **complex passive** is used in formal written or spoken English. It can be used to create an impersonal tone and to express information that has not been verified as true. The **complex passive** can also be used to express past beliefs that are not seen as true now, or general expectations about the future. The “**IT**+ **passive**” form is often used to introduce a topic because new information appears at the end of the sentence. The “**passive + to infinitive**” form is often used when the subject is known from a previous mention. The infinitive in the independent clause must be perfective if the event in the clause occurred in the past and the main clause is in the present tense. (Example 2)

### EXAMPLES

To form the second type of complex passive: change the subject of the *that* clause (“**all students**”) to the subject of the main clause. The verb may have to change to agree with the subject. The *that* clause changes to an infinitive clause.

1. *It is expected that all students complete assignments on time.*  
(singular verb)

*All students are expected to complete assignments on time.*  
(plural verb)

2. *It is known that British soldiers played an early form of ice hockey in Canada.*  
(singular verb)

*British soldiers are known to have played an early form of ice hockey in Canada.*  
(plural verb) (perfective verb)

*Rewrite each statement using the complex passive. Use either the IT or TO INFINITIVE form.*

**Example:** *People believed the president was dishonest.*

The president was believed to be dishonest. or It was believed that the president was dishonest.

1. The weather forecaster expects the weather to be cold and rainy all week.  
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2. People think the Great White shark is the most dangerous creature in the sea.  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Some doctors say that taking aspirin every day is good for your heart.  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Scientists know that diamonds are the hardest material in nature.  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Some people believe that Big Foot lives in the Rocky Mountains.  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Superstitious people think that a black cat walking across your path brings bad luck.  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Change the following passive complex sentences from the IT + PASSIVE + THAT CLAUSE form to SUBJECT + PASSIVE + TO INFINITIVE form or vice versa.*

1. The first wrist watch is believed to have been worn by Queen Elizabeth I in 1571.  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. It is known that Vitamin C prevents colds.  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Canadians are often said to be easy-going and friendly.  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. The bank manager is reported to have stolen \$1 million from the bank.  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. It is expected that Mr. Jennings will win the election.  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. The Loch Ness Monster is said to live in a lake in Scotland.  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. It is sometimes assumed that all Canadians love skiing and skating.  
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