

## Passive 1 (is done / was done)

**A** Study this example:



This house **was built** in 1981.

'This house **was built**' is *passive*.

Compare active and passive:

Somebody **built** this house in 1981. (active)  
*subject* *object*

This house **was built** in 1981. (*passive*)  
subject

When we use an *active* verb, we say *what the subject does*:

- ☐ My grandfather was a builder. **He built** this house in 1981.
- ☐ It's a big company. **It employs** two hundred people.

When we use a *passive* verb, we say *what happens to the subject*:

- ☐ 'How old is this house?' **'It was built in 1981.'**
- ☐ **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)
- ☐ **Is** this room **cleaned** every day? (does somebody clean it? – it's not important 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 etc.) + past participle (done/cleaned/seen etc.)**:  
 (be) done    (be) cleaned    (be) damaged    (be) built    (be) seen etc.

The *past participle* often ends in **-ed** (clean**ed**/damag**ed** etc.), but many important verbs are *irregular* (**built**/**done**/**stolen** etc.). See Appendix 1.

Compare active and passive, *present simple* and *past simple*:

Present simple

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

Past simple

*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** in the robbery?

## Exercises

## 42.1 Complete the sentences. Use these verbs in the correct form, present or past:

cause	damage	find	hold	injure	invite
make	overtake	own	send	show	surround

- Many accidents are caused by careless driving.
- Cheese ..... from milk.
- The roof of the building ..... in a storm a few days ago.
- A cinema is a place where films .....
- You ..... to the party. Why didn't you go?
- This plant is very rare. It ..... in very few places.
- Although we were driving fast, we ..... by a lot of other cars.
- In the US, elections for president ..... every four years.
- There was an accident last night, but fortunately nobody .....
- You can't see the house from the road. It ..... by trees.
- I never received the letter. It ..... to the wrong address.
- The company I work for ..... by a much larger company.

## 42.2 Write questions using the passive. Some are present and some are past.

- Ask about glass. (how / make?) How is glass made?
- Ask about television. (when / invent?) When .....
- Ask about mountains. (how / form?) .....
- Ask about DNA. (when / discover?) .....
- Ask about silver. (what / use for?) .....

## 42.3 Put the verb into the correct form, present or past, active or passive.

- a Two hundred people are employed (employ) by the company.  
b The company employs (employ) 200 people.
- a Water ..... (cover) most of the earth's surface.  
b How much of the earth's surface ..... (cover) by water?
- a While I was on holiday, my camera ..... (steal) from my hotel room.  
b While I was on holiday, my camera ..... (disappear) from my hotel room.
- a Robert's parents ..... (die) when he was very young.  
b Robert and his sister ..... (bring up) by their grandparents.
- a The boat hit a rock and ..... (sink) quickly.  
b Fortunately everybody ..... (rescue).
- a Bill ..... (fire) from his job. He wasn't very good at it.  
b Sue ..... (resign) from her job because she didn't enjoy it any more.
- a It can be noisy living here, but it ..... (not / bother) me.  
b It can be noisy living here, but I ..... (not / bother) by it.
- a Maria had an accident. She ..... (knock) off her bike.  
b Maria had an accident. She ..... (fall) off her bike.
- a I haven't seen these flowers before. What ..... (they / call)?  
b I haven't seen these flowers before. What ..... (you / call) them?

42.4 Instead of using **somebody**, **they**, **people** etc., write a passive sentence.

- Somebody cleans the room every day. The room is cleaned every day
- They cancelled all flights because of fog. All .....
- Somebody accused me of stealing money. .... money.
- How do you use this word? How ..... used?
- The price includes all taxes. All ..... in the price.
- People warned us not to go out alone. We .....
- We don't use this office any more. This .....
- They invited five hundred people to the wedding. Five hundred .....