

UNIVERSITÀ DI CAGLIARI



**CORSO DI LAUREA IN ECONOMIA E GESTIONE  
AZIENDALE**

**CORSO DI LAUREA IN ECONOMIA E FINANZA  
LINGUA INGLESE**

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# THE PASSIVE VOICE

Let's look at this sentence:

- *I drank two cups of coffee.*

→ This is an **active** sentence and it has the subject first, followed by the verb, and finally the object

Various other ways to form sentences. One of them:

→ **Passive** form: it puts the object first

- *Two cups of coffee were drunk* (we can add '*by me*' if we want).

## How to make the passive in English?

Object + verb 'to be' + past participle

# THE PASSIVE VOICE

We delivered the goods yesterday. → **Active**

**SUBJECT**

**OBJECT**

The goods were delivered yesterday → **Passive**

**SUBJECT**

- The object of an active sentence can become the subject of the passive form.

# THE PASSIVE VOICE

- We can not change an active into a passive if there is no object:

*The cost of tags has plunged.*

- We use *BY* to refer to the agent only if it adds value to the sentence.

*The goods were delivered yesterday ~~by us~~.*

# THE PASSIVE VOICE

- We make the passive voice with the verb to be + past participle

*Journalists write the news – Active*

*The news is written **by** journalists - Passive*

- Exercise: take the sentence “**the news is written by journalists**” and put it into as many passive voice tenses as you can.

# THE PASSIVE VOICE

- The news is written by journalists – PRESENT SIMPLE
- The news was written by journalists – PAST SIMPLE
- The news has been written by journalists – PRESENT PERFECT
- The news is being written by journalists – PRESENT CONTINUOUS
- The news was being written by journalists – PAST CONTINUOUS
- The news will be written – FUTURE SIMPLE
- The news must be written – MODALS
- The news is going to be written by journalists – GOING TO
- The news had been written by journalists – PAST PERFECT

# THE PASSIVE VOICE

TENSE	ACTIVE	PASSIVE
Present Simple	I <b>make</b> a cake	A cake <b>is</b> made
Present Contin.	I'm <b>making</b> a cake	A cake <b>is being</b> made.
Past Simple	I <b>made</b> a cake.	A cake <b>was</b> made.
Past Continuous	I <b>was making</b> a cake.	A cake <b>was being</b> made.
Present Perfect	I <b>have made</b> a cake	A cake <b>has been</b> made.
Past Perfect	I <b>had made</b> a cake.	A cake <b>had been</b> made.
Future Simple	I <b>will</b> make a cake.	A cake <b>will be</b> made.
Future be going to	I'm <b>going to</b> make a cake.	A cake <b>is going to be</b> made.
Modal	I <b>must</b> make a cake.	A cake <b>must be</b> made.
Modal Perfect	I <b>should have</b> made a cake.	A cake <b>should have been</b> made.

# THE PASSIVE VOICE - When should we use the passive?

- **1) When we want to change the focus of the sentence:**
  - *The Mona Lisa was painted by Leonardo da Vinci.*
- **2) When who or what causes the action is unknown or unimportant or obvious or 'people in general':**
  - He was arrested.*
  - My bike has been stolen.*
  - The road is being repaired.*
  - The form can be obtained from the post office.*

# THE PASSIVE VOICE - When should we use the passive?

- **3) In factual or scientific writing:**

*The chemical is placed in a test tube and the data entered into the computer.*

- **4) In formal writing instead of using someone/ people/ they:**

*The brochure will be finished next month.*

- **5) In order to put the new information at the end of the sentence to improve style:**

*Three books are used regularly in the class. The books were written by Dr. Bell.*

- **6) When the subject is very long:**

*I was surprised by how well the students did in the test.*

# THE PASSIVE VOICE – pag. 161

## Passives

Passives have the following uses.

- when the agent is unknown or unimportant  
*The stock **was delivered** to us this morning.*  
*The shelves **haven't been upgraded** yet.*  
*The tags **can be switched off** by a kill switch.*
- systems and processes  
*The stock **is scanned** as it enters the warehouse.*  
*The figures **are being finalised** at the moment.*
- formal reports and notices  
*It **is recommended** that smart tags be introduced.*  
*The issue **was raised** by the company's auditors.*
- reporting unconfirmed information  
*The CEO **is said to be** in favour of smart tags.*  
*They **are thought to be** cheaper than barcodes.*

# THE PASSIVE VOICE

## Verbs with two objects

- Some verbs that have two objects can make two different active sentences, and so two different passive sentences, too. For example, the verb 'give' :
- *Active: He gave me the book / He gave the book to me.*
- You can choose either of the two objects to be the subject of the passive sentence.
- *Passive: I was given the book (by him)/ The book was given to me (by him).*
- Other verbs like this are: ask, offer, teach, tell, lend, promise, sell, throw.

# THE PASSIVE VOICE

## The passive in subordinate clauses

You can make the passive in a subordinate clause that has a subject and a normal conjugated verb. This is really the same as a normal passive.

- *Active: I thought that Mary had kissed John.*
- *Passive: I thought that John had been kissed by Mary.*
- *Active: He knew that people had built the church in 1915.*
- *Passive: He knew that the church had been built in 1915.*

# THE PASSIVE VOICE

You can also make the passive using a passive gerund or a passive infinitive in the same place as a normal gerund or infinitive.

- *The child loves being cuddled.*
- *She would like to be promoted.*

# THE PASSIVE VOICE – pag. 124

## Language check

## Passives

The passive is formed with the appropriate tense of the verb *be* + the past participle of the main verb.

*... smart shelves which **are fitted** with tag readers.*

*Smart tags **can be scanned** automatically.*

*As a result, shipment errors and theft **will be reduced**.*

– We use the passive form when the agent is unimportant.

*The tags **are currently being piloted** in major supermarkets (by Gillette).*

– The passive is often used in formal reports and notices.

*It **has been established** that shipment errors **will be greatly reduced**.*



For more information, see page 161.

# THE PASSIVE VOICE – pag. 124

## Practice

**1** Write the following sentences in the passive. Do not include the agent if it is not important.

**1** Consumer groups have brought the issue of consumer privacy to light.

*The issue of consumer privacy has been brought to light.*

---

**2** Manufacturers will install smart tags on all sorts of products.

---

**3** Consumer groups are preparing petitions against the use of smart tags.

---

**4** Lorries and trucks transport raw materials to the factories.

---

**5** Supermarkets are considering eliminating checkouts altogether.

---

**6** Consumers should try to access more information about smart tags.

---

## Practice

**1** Write the following sentences in the passive. Do not include the agent if it is not important.

1 Consumer groups have brought the issue of consumer privacy to light.

*The issue of consumer privacy has been brought to light.*

2 Manufacturers will install smart tags on all sorts of products.

**2** Smart tags will be installed on all sorts of products.

3 Consumer groups are preparing petitions against the use of smart tags.

**3** Petitions are being prepared (by consumer groups) against the use of smart tags.

4 Lorries and trucks transport raw materials to the factories.

**4** Raw materials are transported (by lorry and truck / by lorries and trucks) to the factories.

5 Supermarkets are considering eliminating checkouts altogether.

**5** The elimination of checkouts is being considered by supermarkets.

6 Consumers should try to access more information about smart tags.<sup>16</sup>

**6** More information about smart tags should be accessed by consumers.

# THE PASSIVE VOICE – pag. 124

2 Complete the text with either the appropriate active or passive form of the following verbs.

make find buy load use scan track remove access  
send transport insert throw away



**D**uring one of the last stages of production, tag readers <sup>1</sup> are inserted into the packaging of certain items destined for a well-known supermarket chain.

They are then <sup>2</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ onto trucks and <sup>3</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ to the supermarkets.

A young woman <sup>4</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ one of these items and <sup>5</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ her credit card to pay for it. Information about her, such as her name, address and a list of all the items in her shopping trolley <sup>6</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ into the shop's computer system.

She then <sup>7</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ various

purchases in different stores, paying each time with the same credit card.

What she doesn't realise is that all her movements <sup>8</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ and that until the packaging of the tagged item

<sup>9</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ and <sup>10</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ information about everywhere she goes, everything she buys and how much she is willing to pay for items

<sup>11</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ easily by marketers and retailers.

Soon, a letter <sup>12</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ to her suggesting that all the products she prefers to buy from high street retailers

<sup>13</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ in the supermarket at more competitive prices.

# THE PASSIVE VOICE – pag. 124

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- 2) Loaded
- 3) (are) transported
- 4) Buys
- 5) Uses
- 6) Is scanned
- 7) Makes
- 8) Are (being) tracked
- 9) Is removed
- 10) (is) thrown away
- 11) Is accessed / can be accessed
- 12) Is sent
- 13) Are found / can be found

# THE PASSIVE VOICE

- 1. It's a well-known fact that blue glass \_\_\_\_\_ in Bristol.  
• **A** is making **b** is made **c** has made **d** be make
- 2. Every day our class \_\_\_\_\_ by the same three teachers at our school.  
• **A** teaches **b** is teaching **c** is taught **d** taught
- 3. Eri's electronic dictionary was \_\_\_\_\_ in china. It is the latest model.  
• **A** make **b** making **c** makes **d** made
- 4. Some of the students in our class \_\_\_\_\_ given a new map of the city last week. It shows the skating rink and the cinema that we sometimes go to.  
• **A** is **b** are **c** was **d** were
- 5. This year, more than ten million turkeys \_\_\_\_\_ in the united kingdom on christmas day.  
• **A** are going to be eating **b** are going to be eaten **c** are going to eaten **d** are going to eating
- 6. This book \_\_\_\_\_ from recycled paper so it is good for the environment.  
• **A** was making **b** made **c** is made **d** is make

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- 1) B      2) C      3) D      4) D      5) B      6) C

# THE PASSIVE VOICE

- 7) All the PS games consoles in the shop have gone. They \_\_\_\_\_ by other customers in the last three days.  
• **A** buying **b** are buying **c** bought **d** were bought
- 8) Last night, Alberto's bicycle was \_\_\_\_\_ from the garden outside his house.  
• **A** stolen **b** be stolen **c** stealing **d** being stealing
- 9) A few days ago, Fernando's car broke down. But luckily it was fixed \_\_\_ a man at the garage in only two hours.  
• **A** from **b** by **c** with **d** at
- 10) I can wear my new watch all the time. For example, it \_\_\_\_\_ in the shower or in a swimming pool.  
• **A** can wear **b** can worn **c** can be worn **d** can be wearing
- 11) Please remember that cups of tea or coffee \_\_\_\_\_ brought into the classroom.  
• **A** must not **b** must not be **c** must not being **d** must not been
- 12) The last question in the test was very difficult. It was only \_\_\_\_\_ correctly by jair and chris.  
• **A** answer **b** answering **c** answers **d** answered

# PASSIVE FORM

- 1. PEOPLE SPEAK PORTUGUESE IN BRAZIL.
- 

- 2. THE GOVERNMENT IS PLANNING A NEW ROAD NEAR MY HOUSE.
- 

BUILT THIS HOUSE IN 1943.

---

PAINTING GUERNICA AT THAT TIME.

---

CLEANED THE OFFICE.

---

3. MY GRANDFATHER

4. PICASSO WAS

5. THE CLEANER HAS

- 1. PORTUGUESE IS SPOKEN IN BRAZIL.
- 2. A NEW ROAD IS BEING PLANNED NEAR MY HOUSE.
- 3. THIS HOUSE WAS BUILT (BY MY GRANDFATHER) IN 1943.
- 4. GUERNICA WAS BEING PAINTED (BY PICASSO) AT THAT TIME.
- 5. THE OFFICE HAS BEEN CLEANED.

# PASSIVE FORM

- 6. HE HAD WRITTEN THREE BOOKS BEFORE 1867.

\_\_\_\_\_ 7. JOHN WILL TELL YOU  
LATER. \_\_\_\_\_ 8. BY THIS TIME  
TOMORROW WE WILL HAVE SIGNED THE DEAL.

\_\_\_\_\_ 9. SOMEBODY SHOULD  
DO THE WORK. \_\_\_\_\_ 10. THE  
TRAFFIC MIGHT HAVE DELAYED JIMMY.

- 6. THREE BOOKS HAD BEEN WRITTEN BEFORE 1867.
- 7. YOU WILL BE TOLD (BY JOHN) LATER.
- 8. BY THIS TIME TOMORROW THE DEAL WILL HAVE BEEN SIGNED.
- 9. THE WORK SHOULD BE DONE.
- 10. JIMMY MIGHT HAVE BEEN DELAYED (BY THE TRAFFIC).