

- **English Grammar in Use (Grammar Addition to the Textbook English for Pharmacy and Medical Bioanalytics)**
- **Mgr. Zuzana Katerová**
- **Passive Voice**

Passive Voice

Passive voice is used when the focus is on the action. It is not important or not known, however, who or what is performing the action.

Example: My bike was stolen.

In the example above, the focus is on the fact that my bike was stolen. I do not know, however, who did it.

Sometimes a statement in passive is more polite than active voice, as the following example shows:

Example: A mistake was made.

In this case, I focus on the fact that a mistake was made, but I do not blame anyone (e.g. You have made a mistake.).

Form of Passive

Subject + finite form of *to be* + Past Participle

Example: A letter was written.

When rewriting active sentences in passive voice, note the following:

- the object of the active sentence becomes the subject of the passive sentence
- the finite form of the verb is changed (*to be* + past participle)
- the subject of the active sentence becomes the object of the passive sentence (or is dropped)



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Examples of Passive

Tense		Subject	Verb	Object
Simple Present	<i>Active:</i>	Rita	writes	a letter.
	<i>Passive:</i>	A letter	is written	by Rita.
Simple Past	<i>Active:</i>	Rita	wrote	a letter.
	<i>Passive:</i>	A letter	was written	by Rita.
Present Perfect	<i>Active:</i>	Rita	has written	a letter.
	<i>Passive:</i>	A letter	has been written	by Rita.
Future I	<i>Active:</i>	Rita	will write	a letter.
	<i>Passive:</i>	A letter	will be written	by Rita.
Modals	<i>Active:</i>	Rita	can write	a letter.
	<i>Passive:</i>	A letter	can be written	by Rita.
Present Progressive	<i>Active:</i>	Rita	is writing	a letter.
	<i>Passive:</i>	A letter	is being written	by Rita.
Past Progressive	<i>Active:</i>	Rita	was writing	a letter.
	<i>Passive:</i>	A letter	was being written	by Rita.
Past Perfect	<i>Active:</i>	Rita	had written	a letter.
	<i>Passive:</i>	A letter	had been written	by Rita.
Future II	<i>Active:</i>	Rita	will have written	a letter.
	<i>Passive:</i>	A letter	will have been written	by Rita.
Conditional I	<i>Active:</i>	Rita	would write	a letter.
	<i>Passive:</i>	A letter	would be written	by Rita.
Conditional II	<i>Active:</i>	Rita	would have written	a letter.
	<i>Passive:</i>	A letter	would have been written	by Rita.



Examples of Passive with two Objects

Rewriting an active sentence with two objects in passive voice means that one of the two objects becomes the subject, the other one remains an object. Which object to transform into a subject depends on what you want to put the focus on.

	Subject	Verb	Object 1	Object 2
Active:	Rita	wrote	a letter	to me.
Passive:	A letter	was written	to me	by Rita.
Passive:	I	was written	a letter	by Rita.

As you can see in the examples, adding *by Rita* does not sound very elegant. That's why it is usually dropped.

Personal and Impersonal Examples of Passive

Personal Passive simply means that the object of the active sentence becomes the subject of the passive sentence. So every verb that needs an object (transitive verb) can form a personal passive.

Example: *They build houses. – Houses are built.*

Verbs without an object (intransitive verb) normally cannot form a personal passive sentence (as there is no object that can become the subject of the passive sentence). If you want to use an intransitive verb in passive voice, you need an impersonal construction – therefore this passive is called *Impersonal Passive*.

Example: *he says – it is said*

Impersonal Passive is not as common in English as in some other languages (e.g. German, Latin). In English, *Impersonal Passive* is only possible with verbs of perception (e. g. say, think, know).

Example: *They say that women live longer than men. – It is said that women live longer than men.*

Although *Impersonal Passive* is possible here, *Personal Passive* is more common.

Example: *They say that women live longer than men. – Women are said to live longer than men.*



The subject of the subordinate clause (women) goes to the beginning of the sentence; the verb of perception is put into passive voice. The rest of the sentence is added using an infinitive construction with 'to' (certain auxiliary verbs and *that* are dropped).

Sometimes the term *Personal Passive* is used in English lessons if the indirect object of an active sentence is to become the subject of the passive sentence.

Passive Voice with Infinitives

The infinitive passive voice is used after modal verbs and other most verbs normally followed by an infinitive.

Verb + be + past participle

Examples:

You have to **be tested** on your English grammar.

John might **be promoted** next year.

She wants to **be invited** to the party.

I expect to **be surprised** on my birthday.

You may **be disappointed**.

Passive Voice with Gerunds I

Gerunds are used after prepositions and verbs normally followed by a gerund.

Verb + being + past participle

Examples:

I remember **being taught** to drive.

The children are excited about **being taken** to the zoo.

Most film stars hate **being interviewed**.

Kids like **being given** presents.



Most Common Verbs Followed by Verb + -ing

A: admit, appreciate, avoid, allow! advise!	L: like, love
B: bother, begin	M: mind, miss
C: consider, continue, carry on, count on	P: postpone, put off, prefer, prevent,
D: deny, delay, dislike	practise
E: enjoy	R: risk, recall, recommend, resent, resist,
F: feel like, fancy, face, finish, forget!	report, remember!, regret!
G: give up, go on	S: start, stop!, suggest
H: hate	T: try!
I: imagine, involve, insist on	!!! can't stand, can't bear, can't help
K: keep, keep on	

Mind the difference between the verbs followed either by verb + -ing or by infinitive

*Our lab assistant won't **allow** eating in the lab. X We are not **allowed to** eat in the lab.*

*I'd **advise** staying longer. X I'd **advise you to** stay longer.*

*I'll never **forget** seeing him dying.*

*I won't **forget to** go shopping, you needn't worry.*

*I can't **remember** locking the door.*

***Remember to** take notes at the lecture.*

*I will always **regret** not getting the chance to say goodbye to you.*

*I **regret to** tell/inform you that ...*



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Passive Voice with Gerunds II

Verb in Passive + -ing (this pattern is used with the following verbs)

bring	hear	keep	notice	see
catch	find	leave	observe	send

Examples:

The burglars **were seen entering** the bank.

She **was kept waiting** for over three hours.



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