

# Passive 1 (is done / was done)

Study this example:



This house was built in 1935.

Was built is *passive*.

Compare active and passive:

Somebody built **this house** in 1935. (*active*)  
subject object

**This house** was built in 1935. (*passive*)  
subject

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

- My grandfather was a builder. He built this house in 1935.
- It's a big company. It employs two hundred people.

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

- This house is quite old. It was built in 1935.
- Two hundred people are employed by the company.

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.

The passive is be (is/was etc.) + *past participle* (done/cleaned/seen etc.):

(be) done (be) cleaned (be) damaged (be) built (be) seen etc.

For irregular past participles (done/seen/known etc.), see Appendix 1.

Study the active and passive forms of the *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 often invited to parties.
- 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?

42.1 Complete the sentences using one of these verbs in the correct form, present or past:

-cause      damage      hold      invite      make  
 overtake      show      surround      translate      write

- 1 Many accidents are caused by dangerous driving.
- 2 Cheese \_\_\_\_\_ from milk.
- 3 The roof of the building \_\_\_\_\_ in a storm a few days ago.
- 4 You \_\_\_\_\_ to the wedding. Why didn't you go?
- 5 A cinema is a place where films \_\_\_\_\_.
- 6 In the United States, elections for president \_\_\_\_\_ every four years.
- 7 Originally the book \_\_\_\_\_ in Spanish, and a few years ago it \_\_\_\_\_ into English.
- 8 Although we were driving quite fast, we \_\_\_\_\_ by a lot of other cars.
- 9 You can't see the house from the road. It \_\_\_\_\_ by trees.

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

- 1 Ask about glass. (how / make?) How is glass made?
- 2 Ask about television. (when / invent?) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 Ask about mountains. (how / form?) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 Ask about Pluto (*the planet*). (when / discover?) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 Ask about silver. (what / use for?) \_\_\_\_\_

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

- 1 It's a big factory. Five hundred people are employed (employ) there.
- 2 Did somebody clean (somebody / clean) this room yesterday?
- 3 Water \_\_\_\_\_ (cover) most of the earth's surface.
- 4 How much of the earth's surface \_\_\_\_\_ (cover) by water?
- 5 The park gates \_\_\_\_\_ (lock) at 6.30 p.m. every evening.
- 6 The letter \_\_\_\_\_ (post) a week ago and it \_\_\_\_\_ (arrive) yesterday.
- 7 The boat hit a rock and \_\_\_\_\_ (sink) quickly. Fortunately everybody \_\_\_\_\_ (rescue).
- 8 Richard's parents \_\_\_\_\_ (die) when he was very young. He and his sister \_\_\_\_\_ (bring up) by their grandparents.
- 9 I was born in London, but I \_\_\_\_\_ (grow up) in Canada.
- 10 While I was on holiday, my camera \_\_\_\_\_ (steal) from my hotel room.
- 11 While I was on holiday, my camera \_\_\_\_\_ (disappear) from my hotel room.
- 12 Why \_\_\_\_\_ (Sue / resign) from her job? Didn't she enjoy it?
- 13 Why \_\_\_\_\_ (Bill / sack) from his job? What did he do wrong?
- 14 The company is not independent. It \_\_\_\_\_ (own) by a much larger company.
- 15 I saw an accident last night. Somebody \_\_\_\_\_ (call) an ambulance but nobody \_\_\_\_\_ (injure), so the ambulance \_\_\_\_\_ (not / need).
- 16 Where \_\_\_\_\_ (these photographs / take)? In London? \_\_\_\_\_ (you / take) them, or somebody else?
- 17 Sometimes it's quite noisy living here, but it's not a problem for me - I \_\_\_\_\_ (not / bother) by it.

42.4 Rewrite these sentences. Instead of using somebody, they, people etc., write a passive sentence.

- 1 Somebody cleans the room every day. The room is cleaned every day.
- 2 They cancelled all flights because of fog. All \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 People don't use this road much. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 Somebody accused me of stealing money. I \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 How do people learn languages? How \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 Somebody warned us not to go out alone. \_\_\_\_\_