

UNIT 3

Introduction to the passive

The passive is dealt with in Units 2, 3, and 7.

Form

to be + past participle

The tense of the verb *to be* changes to give different tenses in the passive. Compare:

The annual company dinner **is being held** next week. (Present Continuous passive)

All the employees **are invited** every year. (Present Simple passive)

Family members **weren't invited** last year, but this year they **were**. (Present Perfect passive)

Most people **would love to be invited** to the dinner. (Passive infinitive)

Use

- Passive sentences move the focus from the subject to the object of active sentences.

Alfred Hitchcock **directed** Psycho in 1960.

Psycho, one of the classic thrillers of all time, **was directed** by Alfred Hitchcock.

The passive is not just another way of expressing the same sentence in the active. We choose the active or the passive depending on what we are more interested in. In the first sentence, we are more interested in Alfred Hitchcock; in the second sentence, Psycho has moved to the beginning of the sentence because we are more interested in the film.

- By and the agent are often omitted in passive sentences if the agent:

- is not known.

My apartment **was robbed** last night.

- is not important.

This bridge **was built** in 1886.

- is obvious.

I **was fined** £100 for speeding.

- The passive is associated with an impersonal, formal style. It is often used in notices and announcements.

Customers **are requested** to refrain from smoking.

It **has been noticed** that reference books **have been removed** from the library.

- In informal language, we often use *you*, *we*, and *they* to refer to people in general or to no person in particular. In this way, we can avoid using the passive.

You can buy stamps in lots of shops, not just the post offices.

They're building a new department store in the city centre.

We speak English in this shop.

- Be careful! Many past participles are used as adjectives.

I'm very **interested** in modern art.

We were extremely **worried** about you.

I'm **exhausted**! I've been working hard all day.

2.4 Present Simple and Present Continuous passive

Form

Present Simple Passive

am/is/are + past participle

Present Continuous Passive

am/is/are being + past participle

It	is is being	mended.
They	are are being	

Use

The uses are the same in the passive as in the active.

My car **is serviced** every six months. (habit)

Computers **are used** in all areas of life and work. (fact that is always true)

Sorry about the mess. The house **is being redecorated** at the moment. (activity happening now)

Introduction to past tenses

We use different past tenses to focus on different moments and periods of time in the past.

Look at the diagram. Read the sentences.

When Andrea arrived at work at 9.00 a.m. ...

8.30 9.00 9.30 10.00

Her secretary opened the post.

Her secretary was opening the post.

Her secretary had opened the post.

3.1 Past Simple

Form

The form of the Past Simple is the same for all persons.

Positive

I	finished left arrived	yesterday. at 3 o'clock. three weeks ago.
He/She/It		
We		
You		
They		

Negative

I	didn't	finish leave	yesterday. at 3 o'clock.
She			
They			
(etc.)			

Question

When	did	you he they (etc.)	finish the report? get married?
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Short answer

Did you enjoy the meal?	Yes, we did. No, we didn't.
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Use

The Past Simple is used to express:

- a finished action in the past.
We met in 2000.
I went to Manchester last week.
John left two minutes ago.
- actions that follow each other in a story.
Mary walked into the room and stopped. She listened carefully. She heard a noise coming from behind the curtain. She threw the curtain open, and then she saw ...

3 a past situation or habit.

When I was a child, we lived in a small house by the sea. Every day I played on the beach with my brother.

This use is often expressed with *used to*.

We used to live in a small house ... I used to walk for miles ...

Spelling of verb + -ed

1 Most verbs add -ed to the base form of the verb.

worked wanted helped washed

2 When the verb ends in -e, add -d.

liked used hated cared

3 If the verb has only one syllable, with one vowel + one consonant, double the consonant before adding -ed.

stopped planned robbed

But we write *cooked, seated, and moaned* because there are two vowels.

4 The consonant is not doubled if it is -y or -w.

played showed

5 In most two-syllable verbs, the end consonant is doubled if the stress is on the second syllable.

pre'ferred ad'mitted

But we write *'entered* and *'visited* because the stress is on the first syllable.

6 Verbs that end in a consonant + -y change the -y to -ied.

carried hurried buried

But we write *enjoyed*, because it ends in a vowel + -y.

There are many common irregular verbs.

►► Irregular verbs p157

Past Simple and time expressions

Look at the time expressions that are common with the Past Simple.

I met him	last night.
	two days ago.
	yesterday morning.
	in 2001.
	in summer.
	when I was young.

3.2 Past Continuous

Form

Positive and negative

I	was	working.
He	wasn't	
She		
It		
We	were	
You	weren't	
They		

Question

What	was	I she he it	doing?
	were	we you they	

Were you looking for me?
Were they waiting outside?

Short answer

Yes, I was./No I wasn't.
Yes, they were./No, they weren't.

Use

We often use the Past Continuous in sentences with the Past Simple. The Past Continuous refers to longer, background activities, while the Past Simple refers to shorter, completed actions.

The children were playing in the garden ...



... when their grandparents arrived.

The Past Continuous is used:

1 to express activities in progress before, and probably after, a particular time in the past.

At 7 o'clock this morning I was having my breakfast.

I walked past your house last night. There was an awful lot of noise. What were you doing?

2 for descriptions.

Jan looked beautiful. She was wearing a green cotton dress. Her eyes were shining in the light of the candles that were burning nearby.

3 to express an interrupted past activity.

When the phone rang, I was having a shower.

While we were playing tennis, it started to rain.

4 to express an incomplete activity in the past in order to contrast with the Past Simple that expresses a completed activity.

I was reading a book during the flight. (I didn't finish it.)

I watched a film during the flight. (the whole film)

Note

The Past Simple is usually used to express a repeated past habit or situation. But the Past Continuous can be used if the repeated habit becomes a longer setting for something. Compare:

I studied English for ten years.

I first met Harry while I was studying English.

►► Workbook p20 More information on while, during, and for

3.3 Past Simple or Past Continuous?

1 Sometimes we can use the Past Simple or the Past Continuous. The Past Simple focuses on past actions as simple facts. The Past Continuous focuses on the duration of past situations and activities. Compare:

A *I didn't see you at the meeting last night.*

B *No. I stayed at home and watched football.*

A *I didn't see you at the meeting last night.*

B *No. I was watching football at home.*

2 Questions in the Past Simple and Past Continuous refer to different time periods: the Past Continuous asks about activities before; the Past Simple asks about what happened after.

When his father died, Peter was studying medicine at medical school. He decided that it was better to go home to his mother and postpone his studies.

What was Peter doing when his father died?

What did Peter do when his father died?

He was studying.
He went home to his mother.

UNIT 4

3.4 Past Perfect

Perfect means 'before,' so Past Perfect refers to an action in the past that was completed before another action in the past.

Form

The form of the Past Perfect is the same for all persons.

Positive and negative

I	'd (had)	seen him before.
You	hadn't	finished work at 6 o'clock.
We		
(etc.)		

Question

Where had	you she they (etc.)	been before?
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Short answer

Had he already left?	Yes, he had. No, he hadn't.
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Use

- The Past Perfect is used to make clear that one action in the past happened *before* another action in the past.

When I got home, I found that someone **had broken** into my apartment and **had stolen** my DVD player, so I called the police.

PAST → X → X → X → NOW
My DVD player was stolen I arrived home I called the police

Action 1: Someone broke into my apartment and stole my DVD player.

Action 2: I got home and called the police.

I didn't want to go to the cinema with my friends because I'd **seen** the film before.

PAST → X → X → NOW
I saw the film My friends saw the film

Action 1: I saw the film.

Action 2: My friends went to the cinema to see the film.

- Notice the difference between the following sentences:

When I got to the office, Peter **went** home.

(= First I arrived, then Peter left.)

When I got to the office, Peter **had gone** home.

(= First Peter left, then I arrived.)

3.5 Past tenses in the passive

Form

Past Simple Passive	was/were + past participle
Past Continuous Passive	was/were being + past participle
Past Perfect Passive	had been + past participle

Use

The uses are the same in the passive as in the active.

The bridge **was built** in 1876. (finished action in the past)

The bomb **was being defused** when it exploded. (interrupted past activity)

The letter didn't arrive because it **had been sent** to my old address. (one action before another action in the past)

Introduction to modal verbs

The modal verbs are *can, could, may, might, must, will, would, should, ought to*. They are known as modal auxiliary verbs because they 'help' another verb. (See also Units 1, 5, 8, and 9.)

I **can** swim.

Do you think I **should** go?

Form

- There is no -s in the third person singular.
She **can** sing. He **must** be tired. It **might** rain.
- There is no *do/does/don't/doesn't* in the question or negative.
What **should** I do? Can I help you? You **mustn't** steal!
He **can't** swim. I **won't** be a minute.
- Modal auxiliary verbs are followed by the infinitive without *to*. The exception is *ought to*.
You **must** go. I'll **help** you. You **ought to** see a doctor.
- They have no infinitives and no -ing forms. Other expressions are used instead.
I'd love to **be able to** sing.
I hate **having to** get up on cold, winter mornings.
- They don't usually have past forms. Instead, we can use them with perfect infinitives:
You **should have told** me that you can't swim. You **might have drowned**!
or we use other expressions:
I **had to** work hard in school.

Note

Could is used with a past meaning to talk about a general ability.

I **could** swim when I was six. (= general ability)

To talk about ability on one specific occasion, we use *was able to/managed to*.

The prisoner **was able to/managed to** escape by climbing on to the roof of the prison. NOT ~~could~~ escape

Use

- Modal verbs express our attitudes, opinions, and judgements of events. Compare:
'Who's that knocking on the door?'
'It's John.' (This is a fact.)
'Who's that knocking on the door?'
'It **could/may/might/must/should/can't** be John.' (These all express our attitude or opinion.)
- Each modal verb has at least two meanings. One use of all of them is to express possibility or probability. (See Unit 9 p147.)
I **must** post this letter! (= obligation)
You **must** be tired! (= deduction, probability)
Could you help me? (= request)
We **could** go to Spain for our holiday. (= possibility)
You **may** go home now. (= permission)
'Where's Anna?' I'm not sure. She **may** be at work.' (= possibility)