

THE PASSIVE VOICE

INTRODUCTORY NOTES.

The passive is frequently used in English to express ideas that require a reflexive or impersonal construction in other languages, and in many cases is also used where the other languages use the active.

It is assumed that students will already know how to construct the passive of the finite verb forms, but the non-finite forms may be less familiar:

	Active	Passive
Infinitive	to choose	to be chosen
Perfect infinitive	to have chosen	to have been chosen
Participle and gerund	choosing	being chosen
Perfect participle and gerund	having chosen	having been chosen

Bearing in mind that the passive is far commoner in English than in some other languages, students must know when to use it: converting active into passive (and vice versa) may be useful for practice purposes, but the process is essentially an artificial one. The following observations may serve as a general guide:

1. When the active form would involve the use of an indefinite or vague pronoun or noun as subject, we generally prefer to use the passive (the agent with "by" is not expressed):

a. I've been robbed! (someone has robbed me!)

b. The building had to be demolished. (they had to demolish the b.)

c. It is assumed that the Government will do something to relieve the situation. (People assume that the Government will do something to relieve the situation)

2. The passive provides a means of avoiding an awkward change of subject in the middle of the sentence:

The Prime Minister arrived back in London last night, and was immediately besieged by reporters. (The Prime Minister arrived back in London last night, and reporters immediately besieged him.)

3. The passive may be used when we wish to make an statement sound impersonal (perhaps out of modesty, or when we have some unpleasant statement to make). The management of a company might be quite happy to announce:

The new working methods that are to be introduced may result in some redundancies.

Similarly, we may express more impersonally, and thus more forcibly, the order given in a below, by using the passive as in b:

- a. *You must tidy up this room.*
 b. *This room must be tidied up.*

4. The passive is not, therefore, simply an equivalent alternative to the active. While both forms of expressing an idea may be syntactically possible, we tend to choose the passive for one of the reasons described above, or if we are interested in what happened to "X" rather than what "Y" did:

- a. *The escaped convict was arrested two days later.*
 (*The police arrested the escaped convict two days later.*)
 b. *Several trees were struck by lightning in last night's storm.*
 (*Lightning struck several trees in last night's storm*)

In a, the passive is used because we are interested in what happened to the escaped convict; and the agent is omitted, not, as in earlier examples, because it is a vague or indefinite noun, but because it is self-evident from the context.

In b, the passive form is to be preferred to the active, even though the agent is neither vague nor self-evident, again because we are more interested in what happened to the trees than in what the lightning did.

5. Some ideas, however, may be expressed naturally and effectively in either the active or the passive form:

- a. *France beat England in yesterday's rugby international.*
 b. *England was beaten by France in yesterday's rugby international.*

In such sentences our choice will depend on what we regard as the "focus of interest" in the sentence.

Some common verbs may be used in combination with adverbs to form "phrasal verbs" with idiomatic meanings: put off = postpone. Students should take care to retain the particle with such verbs in a passive construction.

There is one particular construction in the passive that may appear strange to students. In a sentence like the following, there are two objects, one direct and one indirect:

The crowd gave the King a great reception.

If this is expressed in the passive, we generally make the indirect object the subject, especially as the indirect object in this type of sentence is, more often than not, personal, and we tend to be more interested in persons than things. Furthermore, the person will generally be more particularized than the thing, and may, in the subject position, help to establish the context of the sentence more readily:

The King was given a great reception by the crowd.

There are occasions, however, when we wish to make the direct object the subject (or, we might say, the "focus of interest") of the passive construction. In such cases, we would be implying a greater interest in what is done than to whom it is done:

- a. We shall offer a high salary to a really suitable applicant. (active)*
- b. A high salary will be offered to a really suitable applicant. (passive)*

Another type of sentence that has two possible forms in the passive is that consisting of Subject+Verb (say, feel, expect, etc.)+Noun clause Object:

- a. They say that he knows some very influential people.*
- b. People felt that the social workers were doing valuable work.*
- c. Everyone thought that the government had shown scant regard for public opinion.*

The ideas expressed in these sentences would, for reasons of style, generally be presented in the passive. One possible construction is that where the sentence is introduced by the impersonal *it*:

- a. It is said that he knows some very influential people.*
- b. It was felt that the social workers were doing valuable work.*
- c. It was thought that the Government had shown scant regard for public opinion.*

The use of this impersonal construction in the passive is preferable to the use of a vague or indefinite pronoun as subject in the active. But in many cases a third construction is possible: The subject of the noun clause may be made the subject of the whole sentence in the passive. A special characteristic of this construction is that the verb in the noun clause takes the infinitive form:

- a. He is said to know very influential people.*

4. Most students speak English in this class_____.
5. An elderly couple sheltered her_____.
6. A policeman helped him_____.
7. She finished her work by nine o'clock_____.
8. Nobody can repair this broken chair_____.
9. They carried him into the hospital_____.
10. Are they typing the letters?_____.
11. They have not taken the car into the garage_____.
12. Someone has spilt some milk on the carpet_____.
13. Did anyone answer your question?_____.
14. They showed me the cathedral_____.
15. They told the children to leave the room_____.
16. They allowed her to go to the dining room_____.
17. They didn't tell me the truth_____.
18. Someone will give you a new notebook_____.
19. Someone is teaching him English_____.
20. They had offered me a job_____.
21. Someone has read her the letter_____.
22. Nobody has slept in this bed_____.
23. They looked after the baby_____.
24. They have been looking at her for hours_____.
25. They smiled at the girl as she walked by_____.
26. People speak well of your friend_____.
27. We must look for the key_____.
28. People say that the president will arrive on Monday_____.
29. People think that money is the most important thing in life_____.
30. They thought that he was an artist_____.
31. They think I come from Italy_____.
32. People feared that the criminals would escape_____.
33. People hope that prices won't go up this year_____.
34. People generally assume that the USA is the richest country in the world_____.

Complete the sentences with a passive construction, using the verbs given in the form suggested.

1. Much of London (destroy) _____ by fire in the seventeenth century.
(Past Simple)
2. The man who (bite) _____ by a snake was given a serum. (Past Perfect)
3. A leader should be a man who can (respect) _____. (Infinitive)
4. Many slums (demolish) _____ to make way for new buildings. (Present Continuous.)

5. The police (instruct) _____ to take firm action against hooligans. (Present Perfect)
6. He (save) _____ from bankruptcy by the kindness of a friend. (Past Simple)
7. A cease-fire (expect) _____ (declare) _____ later this week. (Present Simple, Infinitive)
8. A great deal of research (do) _____ into possible causes of cancer (Present Perfect)
9. The worker claimed that he (victimize) _____ by his employers. (Past Continuous)
10. The tenant (evict) _____ for not paying his rent. (Past Simple)
11. It (think) _____ that the Government would do something to help. (Past Perfect)
12. Three hundred new houses (build) _____ by the end of next year. (Future Perfect)
13. Because of a strike, work on the building had to (discontinue) _____. (Infinitive)
14. The witness strongly objected to (cross-examine) _____. (Gerund)
15. (Threaten) _____ by a blackmailer, he immediately informed the police. (Perfect Participle)
16. I am not accustomed to (treat) _____ in that way. (Gerund)
17. The passengers ought (inform) _____ the train (withdraw) _____ from service. (Perfect Infinitive. Past Perfect)
18. Customers (ask) _____ to ensure that they (give) _____ the correct change before leaving the shop, as mistakes cannot afterwards (rectify) _____. (Present Simple, Present Perfect, Infinitive)
19. Was he very upset at (not offer) _____ the job? (Gerund)
20. The man was sent to prison for six months, (find) _____ guilty of fraud. (Perfect Participle)

Rewrite the sentences in the passive, making the words in italics the subject of the sentence or clause in which they appear.

1. They gave *the oldest councillor* the freedom of the city.

2. They denied *access to the secret documents* to all but a few.

3. Someone showed *the child* how to use the telephone.

4. They declared *him* persona non grata and allowed him only forty-eight hours to leave the country.

5. They gave *him* artificial respiration.

-
6. Why didn't they offer *him* the job?
-
7. Didn't they promise *you* a rise in salary at the beginning of the year?
-
8. Someone left *him* a legacy of , 10.000.
-
9. When he looked at the stamps, he found they had sold *him* forgeries.
-
10. What did they pay *you* for doing the job?
-
11. Someone should tell *him* never to do that again.
-
12. They asked *you* to meet me here at 11 o'clock, not half past.
-
13. Will someone send *me* the details?
-
14. We shall send you *the goods* as soon as they are available.
-
15. Someone must teach *that boy* a lesson!
-
16. We must give *slum-clearance* priority over the building of new properties.
-

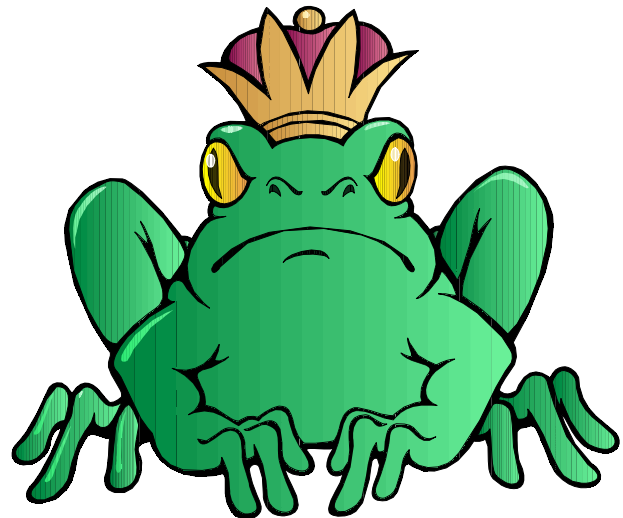
Rewrite these sentences in an alternative passive form, beginning your sentences with the words in italics.

1. It is said that *he* is an honest, hard-working man.
-
2. It is considered that *this surgeon* is a brilliant practitioner.
-
3. It is now thought that *some redundancy in the Midlands* is inevitable.
-
4. It was proved that *the statements he had made* were false.
-
5. It was understood that *Mr Smith* was willing to meet the British Prime Minister.
-
6. It is believed that *the Chancellor* is thinking of imposing special taxes to raise extra revenue.
-
7. It is expected that *the electricity supply industry* will be running into surplus capacity by next year.

-
8. It is reported that *several American motor manufacturers* are planning to set up assembly plants overseas.
-
9. It is expected that *the brewers* will raise the price of beer in the near future.
-
10. It was claimed that *the drug* produced no undesirable side-effects.
-
11. It is said that *the police* acted with great restraint, despite provocation.
-
12. It was alleged that *the Prime Minister* had misled the House
-
13. It is believed that *the Government* has had second thoughts on this problem.
-
14. It was believed that *the explosion* had been caused by a mine.
-
15. It is presumed that *the ship's radio equipment* was put out of the action during the fire.
-
16. It was later admitted that *the information* had been obtained from unreliable sources.
-

OTHER ACTIVITIES

During the last five or six years television has become more and more important to drama in general, not only in offering a valuable testing ground for new dramatists, but also in forming taste and preparing audiences, almost imperceptibly, for new things. The advantage with television in this respect is precisely what has generally been taken as its main disadvantage: the relatively uncritical approach of the mass audience. This is not to say they are really "captive", as superior people like to say: one has only to look at the series of TAM ratings, which record the state of the television set in the testing sample's home every thirty seconds, to find out the speed with which a programme will be switched off if viewers don't like it. But though they



know what they like and what they don't like when they see it, they do not on the whole have any marked preconceptions before any given programme begins. A play, whoever it is by and whatever style it is written, is judged by the same simple but reliable rule of thumb as Wagon Train or What's my line: if they like it, if it holds their attention, it stays on; if not they switch to the other channel or even, in extreme cases switch off.

QUESTIONS

1. When has television become important?
2. What is it important for?
3. Why is it important?
4. Which is the real advantage for television?
5. Do you think it is important to have any preconception of a programme before watching it?
6. Do you agree with the text?
7. Do you think Spanish and British people share the same clues when referring to drama?
8. Do you like watching drama on television or you prefer going to the theatre (in case you go)?
9. Is the text above an old-fashioned or an up-to-date text? Why?
10. Explain the meaning of:

Valuable:	Drama:
Sample:	Reliable:

Now the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner going out at daybreak to hire workers for his vineyard. He made an agreement with the workers for one denarius a day, and sent them to his vineyard. Going out at about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the market place and said to them, "You go to my vineyard too and I will give you a fair wage". So they went. At about the sixth hour and again at about the ninth hour, he went out and he did the same. Then at about the eleventh hour he went out and found more men standing round and he said to them, "Why have you been standing here idle all day?" "Because no one has hired us" they answered. He said to them, "You go into my vineyard too". In the evening, the owner of the vineyard said to his bailiff, "Call the workers and pay them their wages, starting with the last arrivals and ending with the first". So those who were hired at about the eleventh hour came forward and received one denarius each. When the first came, they expected to get more, but they too received one denarius each. They took it but grumbled at the landowner. "The men who came last" they said "have done only one hour, and you have treated the same as us, though we have done a heavy day's work in all the heat." He answered one of them and said, "My friend, I am not being unjust to you; did we not agree on one denarius? Take your earnings and go. I choose to pay the last-comer as much as I pay you. Have I no right to do what I like with my own? Why be envious because I am generous?" Thus the last will be first, and the first, last.

Matthew's Gospel 20, 1-16

QUESTIONS

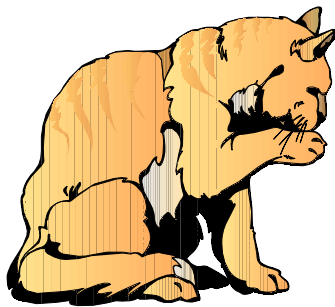
1. Is it the first time you read or listen to that Parable?
2. Do you accept the message included in the text? Why?
3. Do you think something similar to it could happen in your school? Why?
4. Has it ever happened to you?
5. Take out from the text three sentences in the direct speech.
6. Tell the story again in no more than 50 words.
7. Vocabulary. Give a synonym, antonym or explain the meaning of the following words:

Landowner:

grumble:

earning:

They looked long into one another's eyes. Then she gave him a little bow and went to her room. Don Pedro sighed. He wondered whether she still loved Pepe Alvarez and whether it was on account of this that she had never loved him. But he would not allow himself to give way to the unworthy emotion of jealousy. He looked into his heart and was sure that it harboured no feeling of hatred for the young artilleryman. On the contrary, he liked him.



This was not an affair of love and hate, but of honour. On a sudden, he remembered that a few days before when he went to his club he noticed that the conversation suddenly

failed, and, looking back, he seemed to remember that several of the group who were sitting there and chatting eyed him curiously. Was it possible that he had been the subject of their conversation? He shivered at the thought.

The Fair was drawing to its end, and when it was over the Agurias had arranged to go to Cordova, where Don Pedro had an estate which it was necessary for him to visit from time to time. He looked forward to the peace of a country life after the turmoil of Seville. The day after this conversation Soledad, saying she was not well, stayed in the house, and she did the same the day following. Don Pedro visited her in her room morning and evening and they talked of indifferent things. But on the third day his cousin Conchita de Santagador was giving a ball. It was the last of the season and everyone in her exclusive set would be there. Soledad, saying she was still indisposed, announced that she would stay at home.

The point of honour.

W. Somerset Maugham.

QUESTIONS.

1. Did Don Pedro want to be jealous. Why?
2. Why were the Agurias going to Cordova?
3. Where and when did Pedro visit Soledad?
4. What did they talk about?
5. Write down 5 or 6 lines about love, hate and honour.
6. Take out from the text a noun-clause and say what kind it is.
7. Vocabulary:

Estate:	Turmoil:
Ball:	Season:

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

*In 1963 the leader of the Labour Party made a speech explaining plans for a "University on the air" -an educational system which would make use of television, radio and correspondence courses. Many people laughed at the idea, but **it** became part of the Labour Party's Programme, to give educational opportunity to those people who, for one reason or another, had not had a chance to receive further education. The Open University has been a great success in one respect. About 6000 students of all ages get degrees every year. It is disappointing, however, that the great majority of students are from middleclass, educated backgrounds. There have, however, been a number of men and women, serving long sentences in prison, who have taken courses successfully, and obtained degrees.*

Students of the Open University receive their lessons and lectures in their homes, by means of special TV and radio programmes. More than 40.000 people applied, but only 25.000 people could be accepted, for the first courses in 1971. By 1980 there were about 60.000 undergraduates.

*Written work is corrected by part-time tutors who meet **their** students once a month to discuss their work with them and to set them on the right course. Science students are given mini-laboratories which can be set up in their own homes.*

QUESTIONS

1. Answer the following questions in your own words:
 - a) What kind of students was the Open University designed for?
 - b) Was the idea of an Open University accepted easily?
 - c) How often do students see their tutors?
 - d) Where are practical science experiments done?
2. Are the following statements True or False? Support your answers with evidence from the text.
 - a) By 1963 the Open University had already started.
 - b) The Government wanted most of the students to be middleclass.
 - c) Open University students regularly attend classes.
 - d) In 1980, 60.000 students graduated from the Open University.
3. Fill in the gaps or complete the following sentences:

- a) The Open University _____ a success since it started.
 - b) Those people _____ are serving long sentences in prison are also able _____ use of the educational facilities.
 - c) Mass media are _____ importance in education.
 - d) A speech _____ by the Leader of the Labour Party.
4. Who or What do the following words refer to?
- a) it (line 3)
 - b) their (line 14)
5. Match the words on the left with one of the words on the right.
- | | |
|-------------|----------------|
| a) sentence | 1) conference |
| b) further | 2) higher |
| c) chance | 3) word |
| d) speech | 4) occasional |
| | 5) opportunity |
| | 6) shout |
| | 7) a talk |
| | 8) conviction |
6. Write about 50/60 words on the following topic: *Give arguments for and against both traditional universities and the Open University.*

No sex please ... we're only human. By Gill Swain.

FORGET those juicy stories of non-stop bonking in the nineties. They're a load of porkies.

For many couples LIE to researchers by claiming that they have sex several times a week.

They're afraid to admit that the passion has gone out of their marriage, leaving their love-life totally limp. Couples have been fibbing like this for years. And that's not all.

Claims of extra-marital flings and gay sex have also been wildly exaggerated, say experts.

Glenn Wilson, sex psychologist at London University, said yesterday: "A high proportion of long-standing marriages become virtually sexless because the partners become so familiar with each other it would be like committing incest.

Lurid

"But they don't want anyone to think their marriage is breaking down, so they report the 'correct' figure of three times a week."

The experts have stamped on those lurid charts of non-stop lust after a survey by Chicago University

This, like January's report Sexual Behaviour in Britain, shatters the

image that people are flitting from one partner to another.

Instead, it paints a picture of stay-at-homes with sex lives about as exciting as a nice cup of cocoa. It reveals that 94 per cent of people had been

**Couples lie
about their
lays**

faithful to their partners in the past year.

And 75 per cent of married men and 85 per cent of married women declared they had never strayed.

Nearly 3,500 randomly-selected Americans aged 18 to 59 took part in the survey.

A third said they had sex only a few times

a year or not at all.

Another third have a romp several times a month and a quarter make love two or three times a week.

Only 7 per cent said they had sex more than four times a week.

So why have many surveys in recent years branded us as rabbits going at it non-stop?

The answer, says researcher Julia Field, lies in how are picked for the surveys.

Julia, who helped compile January's report, said that couples who volunteered to take part in them are likely to have full sex lives.

Such people cannot be taken as par for the country.

Wives

Julie and her fellow researchers got round this by quizzing a broad cross-section of people.

Only a tenth of married men and a twentieth of wives said they had been unfaithful.

THE PASSIVE VOICE

MMLLDC

BRITISH couples make love less than most other Europeans, say researchers. We average 1.9 times a week, the same as the Danes.

The Dutch lead on 2.5, followed by Austria and Switzerland on 2.4. Italians score 2.3, the French

2.1 and Swedes and Spanish 2.0.

QUESTIONS.

1. Where has this research been carried out?
2. What does the research reveal?
3. Give some reasons why couples lie about their sex life.
4. Give the name of the magazine where the truth about sex-life was told.
5. Vocabulary: sexless, couple, survey, cocoa, shatter.
6. Summarize the text in about 60 words.

I WANT TO KNOW WHAT LOVE IS

Gotta take a little _____ (time)
a little time to _____ over (think) (things)
I better read _____ the lines (between)
In _____ I need it when I'm _____ (case) (older)
This _____ I must _____ (mountain) (climb)
_____ like a world upon my _____ (feels) (shoulders)
_____ the clouds I see love _____ (through) (shine)
It keeps me _____ as life grows _____ (warm) (colder)
In my life there's been _____ and pain (heartache)
I don't know if I can _____ it again (face)
Can't stop now, I've _____ so far (travelled)
to change this _____ life (lonely)
I want to know what love is
I want you to show me
I want to _____ what love is (feel)
I know you can show me
I'm _____ take a little time (gonna)
a little time to look around me
I've got _____ left to _____ (nowhere) (hide)
it looks like love has finally _____ me (found)
In my life there's been heartache and pain
I don't know if I can face it again
I can't stop now, I've travelled so far
to change this lonely life
I want to know what love is
I want you to show me
I want to know what love is
I want you to show me
I want to feel what love is

I know you can show me.

Main features

Vocabulary

Grammatical errors.

The use of simple present.

The use of present perfect.

Revision of the structure I want you to show me.

Put the verbs in brackets into the correct tense. (A variety of tenses will be needed, as well as some conditionals and imperatives; for BE ABLE use CAN/COULD where possible.)

Dear Hilda

1) I just (hear) _____ that my mother suddenly (be) _____ taken ill, and I (like) _____ to go and see how she is.
 2) The trouble is I can't take my dog Tim with me. You (think) _____ you (be able) _____ possibly look after him for a week? 3) You (have) _____ him for a week last year, you (remember) _____ and you (say) _____ he (be) _____ no trouble, and (get) _____ on well with your dog.
 4) If you (be able) _____ have him, I (be able) _____ bring him along any time that (suit) _____ you. 5) He (have) _____ his own bed and bowl, and I (bring) _____ enough tinned dog food to last him a week.
 6) But if it (not be) _____ convenient, (not hesitate) _____ to say so. 7) There (be) _____ quite good kennels near here, and they (take) _____ him if I (ask) _____. 8) He (be) _____ there once before and (seem) _____ to get on all right.

Love

Sarah.

Dear Sarah

1) I (be) _____ very sorry to hear about your mother's illness, and (be) _____ glad that you (go) _____ to Scotland to see how she is.
 2) It (be) _____ nice for her to see you.
 3) Of course I (look) _____ after Tim. 4) We thoroughly (enjoy) _____ having him last year and my dog (miss) _____ him when he (leave) _____ and (look) _____ for him

everywhere. 5) I'm sure he (be) _____ delighted to see him again.

6) You (bring) _____ him on Tuesday afternoon? 7) Or, if that (not suit) _____, any time on Wednesday. 8) (not bother) _____ to bring dog food; 9) I (have) _____ plenty. 10) I hope you (have) _____ time to have tea with me when you (bring) _____ Tim, and that by then you (have) _____ better news of your mother.

Love

Hilda.