

# **The Passive Voice**

**Present Simple Passive / Past Simple Passive / Future Simple Passive**

# The passive voice

## WHAT IS IT?

- We use the passive voice when we want to **emphasise the action** and not the subject
- It is generally used in **formal contexts** and in **written texts**

# The passive voice

WHEN DO WE USE IT?



When the **focus** is on **the action**.

*My bike was stolen.*

The focus is on the fact that my bike was stolen; I don't know who did it.

# The passive voice

WHEN DO WE USE IT?

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We use the passive voice when **the subject is not important**, unnecessary or we don't *know it*.

*The fire was put off.*

It may be evident that firefighters put it off.

# The passive voice

WHEN DO WE USE IT?



We use it when **we don't want to mention the subject** or **we want to be polite**.  
*A mistake was made.*

We don't want to blame anybody for making the mistake.

# The passive voice

WHEN DO WE USE IT?



Nevertheless, there are cases in which we want to indicate who did the action.  
In this case, we use the preposition **BY**.

*The Scarlet Letter was written by Nathaniel Hawthorne.*

*The fire was put off by a neighbour.*

*The gardens were cleaned by prisoners.*

# The passive voice

## FORM

**SUBJECT** + verb to be + past pp + (by someone)

**THE FLOWERS** WERE BOUGHT BY HER MUM

**THE DINNER** IS COOKED BY NANCY

# The passive voice

FROM ACTIVE TO PASSIVE

THE TEACHER

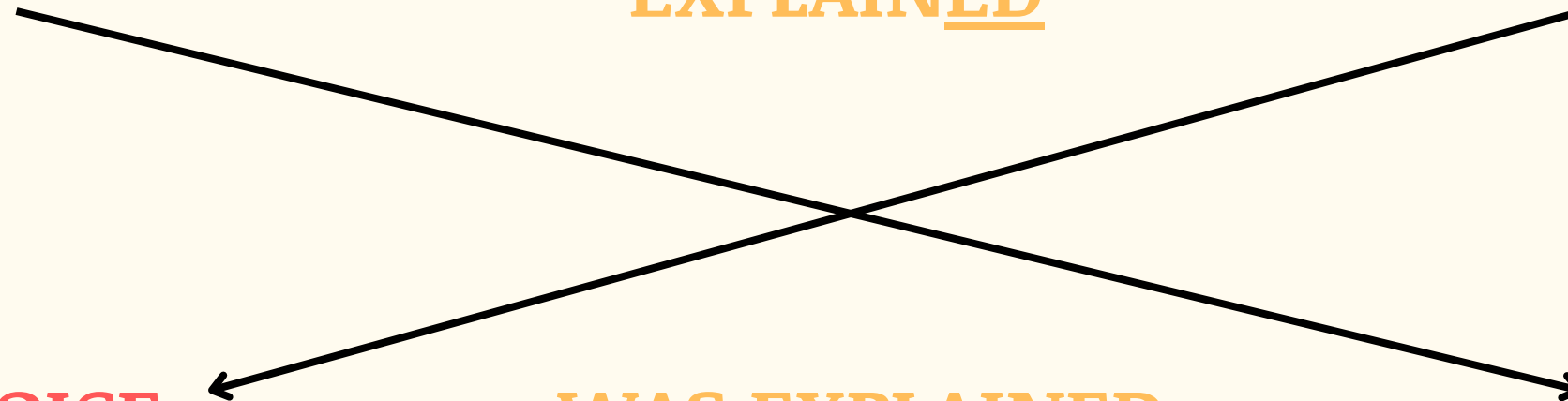
EXPLAINED

THE PASSIVE VOICE

THE PASSIVE VOICE

WAS EXPLAINED

BY THE TEACHER





# The passive voice

NOTE: The verb “to be” in the passive and the main verb in the active voice show **THE SAME VERBAL TENSE** (e.g. past simple)

THE TEACHER

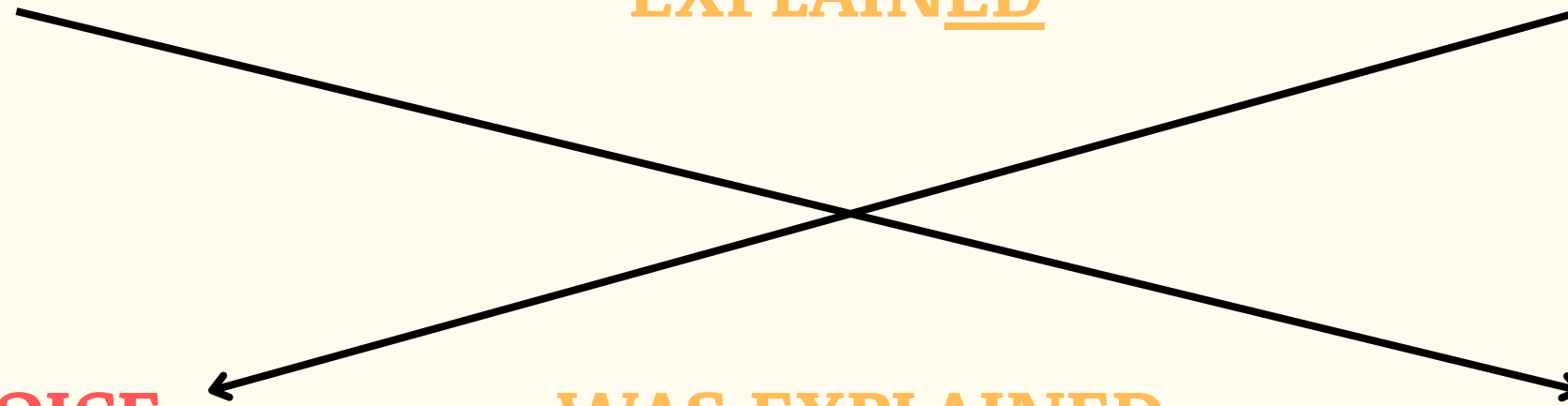
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THE PASSIVE VOICE

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# The passive voice

## DIRECT VS INDIRECT

Sometimes we can find sentences with two objects:

**DIRECT OBJECT & INDIRECT OBJECT**

SHE GAVE **ME** **A RED CARNATION**

In this case, we can form two different passive sentences:

**I** WAS GIVEN A **RED CARNATION** (BY HER)

**A RED CARNATION** WAS GIVEN **TO ME** (BY HER)

# The passive voice

TENSE	ACTIVE	PASSIVE
PRESENT SIMPLE	I send the mail	The mail <u>is</u> sent (by me)
PAST SIMPLE	I sent the mail	The mail <u>was</u> sent (by me)
FUTURE SIMPLE	I will send the mail	The mail <u>will</u> be send

# The passive voice

LET'S PRACTISE A BIT!

People **speak** Portuguese in Brazil.

# The passive voice

LET'S PRACTISE A BIT!

People **speak** Portuguese in Brazil.

Portuguese **is spoken** in Brazil.

- It is not necessary to put “by people”. It is obvious that Portuguese is spoken by people, not cats.

# The passive voice

LET'S PRACTISE A BIT!

The newspaper **publishes** the statistics of unemployment.

# The passive voice

LET'S PRACTISE A BIT!

The newspaper **publishes** the statistics of unemployment.

The statistics of unemployment **are published** by the newspaper.

# The passive voice

LET'S PRACTISE A BIT!

People **transmitted** traditions orally in ancient times.



# The passive voice

LET'S PRACTISE A BIT!

People **transmitted** traditions orally in ancient times.

Traditions **were transmitted** orally in ancient times.

# The passive voice

LET'S PRACTISE A BIT!

They **made** the funeral in the morning.

# The passive voice

LET'S PRACTISE A BIT!

They **made** the funeral in the morning.

The funeral **was made** in the morning.

# The passive voice

LET'S PRACTISE A BIT!

The audience **applauded** the composer.

# The passive voice

LET'S PRACTISE A BIT!

The audience **applauded** the composer.

The composer **was applauded** by the audience.

# The passive voice

LET'S PRACTISE A BIT!

They **make** a lot of paper from wood.

# The passive voice

LET'S PRACTISE A BIT!

They **make** a lot of paper from wood.

A lot of paper **is made** from wood.

# The passive voice

LET'S PRACTISE A BIT!

German teams **won** most of the matches.



# The passive voice

LET'S PRACTISE A BIT!

German teams **won** most of the matches.

Most of the matches **were won** by German teams.

# The passive voice

LET'S PRACTISE A BIT!

Our government **will export** a great amount of our oil to other countries.

# The passive voice

LET'S PRACTISE A BIT!

Our government **will export** a great amount of our oil to other countries.

A great amount of our oil **will be exported** to other countries by our government.

# The passive voice

LET'S PRACTISE A BIT!

Computers **make** fewer mistakes than people.

# The passive voice

LET'S PRACTISE A BIT!

Computers **make** fewer mistakes than people.

Fewer mistakes **are made** by computers than (by) people.

# The passive voice

LET'S PRACTISE A BIT!

The students **will finish** the course by July.

# The passive voice

LET'S PRACTISE A BIT!

John **gave** a bar of chocolate to Jill.

# The passive voice

LET'S PRACTISE A BIT!

John **gave** a bar of chocolate to Jill.

Jill **was given** a bar of chocolate by John.

A bar of chocolate **was given** to Jill by John.



# The passive voice

LET'S PRACTISE A BIT!

The boss **will show** the new computer to Anna.

# The passive voice

LET'S PRACTISE A BIT!

The boss **will show** the new computer to Anna.

The new computer **will be shown** to Anna by the boss.

Anna **will be shown** the new computer by the boss.