

THE PASSIVE VOICE

In the passive, the focus is on the action. It is not important or often not known either who or what is performing the action: "My bike **WAS STOLEN**." = the focus is on the fact that the bike was stolen. We do not know, however, who did it.

Sometimes a statement in the passive is politer than in the active voice, "A mistake **WAS MADE**." = we are saying that a mistake was made, but we do not blame anyone. In summary, we use the passive when:

- a) we want to make the active object more important
- b) we do not know the active subject

We form the passive like this = **SUBJECT + TO BE (AUXILIARY) + PAST PARTICIPLE**

These four things are important to know too:

- a) the object of the active sentence becomes the subject of the passive sentence
- b) the finite form of the verb is changed (to be + past participle)
- c) the subject of the active sentence becomes the object of the passive sentence (or dropped)
- d) the object of an active verb corresponds to the subject of a passive verb:

Active: They built this **HOUSE** in 1486. (**OBJECT** = this house)

Passive: This **HOUSE** was built in 1486. (**SUBJECT** = this house)

We can form the passive in most tenses although some tenses are unusual. To form the required tense, we conjugate the auxiliary verb. So, for example:

- a) present simple: It **IS MADE**.
- b) present continuous: It **IS BEING MADE**.
- c) present perfect: It **HAS BEEN MADE**.

Passive tenses are normally used in the same way as active tenses. For example, the present progressive passive is used like the present progressive active to talk about things that are going on at the time of speaking:

Passive: The papers **ARE BEING PREPARED** now.

Active: The secretary is preparing the papers now.

Not all verbs can have passive forms. Passives don't work with **INTRANSITIVE** verbs like die, arrive, sneeze, lie, go, sit, etc., which can't have objects. There is nothing to become the subject of a passive sentence. Some **TRANSITIVE** verbs too are rarely used in the passive. These are verbs that refer to states not actions like fit, have, lack, resemble, suit.