

LESSON 19

Voices - Active and Passive

1. Verb forms in the active and passive voices.
2. Verb forms in different tenses in active and passive voices.
3. Verb forms in interrogative sentences in active and passive voices.
4. Some common phrases in the passive voice, for example, "It is said", "he is said to be", "supposed to be", "expected to be", "get done".
5. When to use the passive voice.

Study the following:

Teacher: **Complete** your homework.

Student: Madam, it **has** already **been done**.

Teacher: **Done**, by whom?

Student: Of course, by me.

Sujata: Oh Mona! What **have** you **done** to your arm? It's in plaster.

Kriti: Yes, I **was hit** by a cricket ball.

Child: Mama, **is** the lunch **ready**?

Mother: Not yet, dear. It's **being cooked**.

Mother: John, **look** out of the window and tell me if you **can see** Jane coming.

John: Sorry Mom, it's too foggy outside. Nothing **can be seen**.

What difference can you find between the words in blue and the words in red?

They are the verbs in two different voices.

The verbs in red are in the *active voice*. The verbs in green are in the *passive voice*. When we use active voice, we say what the subject does. When we use passive voice, we say what happens to the subject.

Study the following:

Active	the Waiters	serve	food.
Passive	Food	is served	by the waiters.

In this example, in the active voice, the doer of the action, that is, the subject (waiters) is important. In the passive voice, the object (food, in this example) becomes more important and it takes the place of the subject. Note that there is always a change in the verb form while changing from active to passive. These are as follows:

Simple tense

	Active	Passive
(a)	I eat the banana. (present simple)	The banana is eaten.
	I ate the banana (past simple)	The banana was eaten.
	I will eat the banana (future simple)	The banana will be eaten.
(b)	They write the letters. (present simple)	The letters are written.
	They wrote the letters. (past simple)	The letters were written.
	They will write the letters. (future simple)	The letters will be written.

Note: As the sentences in passive voice show naming the agent or the doer of the action in the passive voice may not always be necessary because in spoken English, what we say, often depends up on the context in which we are speaking. However; when we convert the sentence, "Keats wrote the poem 'The Nightingale' into passive voice, we must say, 'The Nightingale' was written by Keats, because this is important to the meaning of the sentence. In this sentence it becomes necessary to refer to the agent using "by".

The change in tense in all the three sets of sentences above is made by changing the "be" form of the verbs (is, am, are, was, were). These "be" forms are combined with the present or past participles such as "eaten", "written", "sent".

Simple continuous tense

I am eating the fruit. (present)	The fruit is being eaten.
I was eating the fruit (past)	The fruit was being eaten.
I will be eating the fruit (future)	(No passive)

The method for changing the '-ing' form of the verb is

Active: eating = eat + -ing

Passive: The base verb 'eat' is changed into its past participle form 'eaten' and the '-ing' form is changed to 'being'.

They are writing the letters. (present)	The letters are being written.
They were writing the letters. (past)	The letters were being written.
They will be writing the letters. (future)	(No passive)

Perfect tense

I have eaten the fruits (present perfect)

The fruits have been eaten.

I had eaten the fruits (past perfect)

The fruits had been eaten.

I shall have eaten the fruits (future perfect)

The fruits shall have been eaten.

(In the simple tenses use the auxiliaries is, am, are, was, will, shall.

Note: in the perfect tense use the auxiliaries have, has, had, shall have, will have in the active voice and has been, had been, shall have been in the passive).

Perfect continuous

I shall have been walking for three hours now.

A sentence like this where the verb is in the future perfect continuous tense does not have a passive form.

Match and See

(Here you will find that some people are on mobile phones. They are receiving answers. Match their dialogues.)

(i) Hello, I'm Sunita. <i>Have you done</i> my booking? Will I be able to board the plane?	No, you may close it. I <i>shall get it opened</i> when I come.
(ii) I'm Prateek speaking, Shall I <i>leave</i> the main door <i>open</i> ?	Yes madam, your booking <i>is done</i> . You've only to come and collect your ticket.
(iii) Chinki, <i>are you doing</i> your work?	<i>It's finished</i> . I'm going to submit it.
(iv) What are you up to, Sohan? Is your luggage packed up?	Don't you worry. It's <i>being done</i> by the contractor.
(v) <i>Who is doing</i> the rest of the arrangement? We've just to reach by six.	My luggage <i>has already been loaded</i> . I'll be there any moment.

Interrogatives

Active Passive	What What	are is	you	doing. being done.	by you? (agent)
Active Passive	Where Where	did was	you the food	eat. eaten.	by you? (agent)
Active Passive	Did Was		they the ball	throw. thrown by them.	by them? (agent)
Active Passive	Did Was	it	they	plan to go. planned to go.	by them? (agent)

(The agentive use of 'by', in blue column, in the passive voice should be avoided.)

Use of some common phrases in the passive voice: 'It is said', 'he is said to be'; 'supposed to be'; 'expected to be'; 'had done' or 'get something done'

It is said

- (i) *It is said* inflation will go up.
- (ii) *It is said* they are honest.
- (iii) *It is said* that the people in glass houses should not throw stones at others.
- (iv) *It is said* that monkeys are very revengeful.

Said to be

- (i) He is *said to be* a weak manager.
- (ii) She is *said to be* extremely tolerant and polite.
- (iii) Property rates are *said to be* soaring.

Is supposed to be

- (i) Don't go, he's *supposed to be* here in ten minutes.
- (ii) This house with high walls is *supposed to be* owned by an actress.
- (iii) The guard is *supposed to be* on duty all night.

Expected to be

- (i) The train tickets are *expected to be* delivered by courier tomorrow morning.
- (ii) The bridge is *expected to be* completed before the Commonwealth Games.

Had or get/got

- (i) Her car looks new. She *had* it painted a few weeks ago.
- (ii) You have to *get* your work *done* before it begins raining.
- (iii) I have to *get* things *done* otherwise the principal will be annoyed.
- (iv) He had to *get* the room set before the manager came.

Exercise 1

Complete the following dialogues choosing the suitable phrases from the box.

supposed to, expected to be, supposed to be, it is said, get done.

- (i) He is back soon.

- (ii) He is late, he is back by 5. p.m.
- (iii) that the highway accidents are increasing.
- (iv) Many people are here to help.
- (v) They should not play any mischief. They are good people.
- (vi) that this building will collapse soon.
- (vii) You are not disturb at this time.
- (viii) that the plane will be confiscated.
- (ix) that the government will increase the rates after the elections.
- (x) expert in all arts.

When to use the passive voice

Study the following:

- (i) Question – Who stitched the frocks?
 Answer The tailor stitched the frocks. (Active)
 Question – What was stitched by the tailor?
 Answer The frocks were stitched by the tailor. (Passive)
- (ii) Question – Who killed the lion?
 Answer Sultan killed the lion. (Active)
 Question – What was killed?
 Answer The lion was killed. (Passive)

Passive is used when the object is important, and active is used when the agent is important.

Exercise 2

Here are some statements. Frame connected statements / sentences in passive voice, using the words given in parenthesis against each.

Example:

She should have arrived by this time. (hope, attack highway robbers).

She should have arrived by this time. Hope, she has not been attacked by the highway robbers.

- (i) I have no money on me. (my purse, steal, someone)
- (ii) Anand's sister is missing. (kidnap, perhaps)

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| (iii) My chairs are broken. | (I, get, repair) |
| (iv) Will you please pick up your dresses. | (they, stitched, already) |
| (v) Ravi has become the General Manager. | (he, promoted) |

Exercise 3

Complete the following sentences using get/got.

Example:

My watch is not working. (repaired)

My watch is not working. I must get it repaired.

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|---|----------------------------|
| (i) The work is still pending. | (completed) |
| (ii) My tap is still leaking. | (repaired) |
| (iii) You can carry the lunch. | (I, packed) |
| (iv) There has been a robbery in my house. | (F.I.R. lodge.) |
| (v) The walls of their house are too dirty. | (white wash, come, guests) |
| (vi) They are taking the child to the hospital. | (immunised) |

Exercise 4

Write questions in passive voice using the words given in parenthesis.

Example:

Ask about the painting. (whom)

By whom has this painting been made?

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| (i) Ask who permitted him to go. | (who, permit,) |
| (ii) Ask about the drinks. | (how, consumed, fast) |
| (iii) Ask about the plywood. | (where, need, be) |

Answers to Exercise 1

- (i) expected to be (ii) supposed to be (iii) it is said (iv) expected to be (v) supposed to be
(vi) it is expected (vii) supposed to (viii) it is said (ix) it is said (x) he is said to be

Answers to Exercise 2

- (i) I've no money on me. My purse has been stolen.
(ii) Anand's sister is missing. Perhaps she has been kidnapped.
(iii) My chairs are broken. I've to get them repaired.
(iv) Will you please pick up your dresses? They've already been stitched.
(v) Ravi has been promoted to the post of General Manager.

Answers to Exercise 3

- (i) The work is still pending. I've to get it completed.
- (ii) My tap is still leaking. I've to get it repaired.
- (iii) I'll get your lunch packed. You can carry it.
- (iv) There has been a robbery in my house. I've to get the F.I.R. lodged.
- (v) The walls of my house are too dirty. I've to get them white washed before the guests arrive.
- (vi) They are taking their child to hospital to get him immunized.

Answers to Exercise 4

- (i) By whom were you permitted to go?
- (ii) How could the drinks be consumed so fast?
- (iii) Where will this plywood be needed?