

I. STANDARD PASSIVES**1. Difference between active and passive constructions (besides verb forms)****Active sentences / clauses**

The subject

- ✓ establishes what the sentence or clause is about.
- ✓ refers to something already which is already known by the reader or listener.

Passive sentences / clauses

The subject

- ✓ establishes what the sentence or clause is about.
- ✓ is not the "doer" (agent) but the "receiver" ("recipient") of the action.

2. When do we choose passive constructions instead of active ones?

1. When the new / important information is

- ✓ what happened to the subject: *Individuals have been expected to make their own housing arrangements.*
- ✓ who or what did it: *Private hospitals, clinics and surgeries are in general well equipped and efficient and may be run by a variety of commercial organizations or religious groups.*
- ✓ how it was done: *...; their costing was ill thought out; ...*

2. When the agent ("doer") is unknown or unspecified: *The problem of paying for the treatment of these patients, who must be helped (by whom?) because of health threats to the population, has become urgent.*

3. When we want to avoid very long subjects —a passive construction allows us to put a long and / or complex phrase at the end of the clause or sentence, where it is easier to understand than at the beginning.

3. What do we use standard passive constructions for?

Passive constructions are used

- ✓ to describe processes;

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- ✓ in various forms (often academic) styles of discourse —e.g., to introduce evidence, argument, or opinion: ..., *it is estimated that between 50 to 60 per cent of the population ...* or to describe procedure in formally reporting scientific experiments;
- ✓ to avoid the implication of personal involvement or responsibility: ...*how much public responsibility should be embraced*;
- ✓ with certain verbs —verbs we use when the person who did the action is generally unimportant. These verbs often describe claiming, blaming, acts of destruction or emotional reactions: *Until the 1960s dependency upon social welfare was widely perceived to be shameful and shaming*.

4. What do they look like?**Basic pattern:**

AUXILIARY VERB + PAST PARTICIPLE OF MAIN VERB

(Be / Get)

If the agent is specified, it comes at the end of the clause and (generally) follows *by*.

E.g.: The whole house got flooded.

E.g.: Several protesters were taken away by the police.

5. Choosing between be and get as auxiliary verbs

"Get" is commonly referred to as a colloquial alternative to "be" for forming passive constructions. In certain cases, this may be so. However, we also use "get" to suggest

- ✓ that the action is unexpected, involuntary, or possibly unwelcome:
E.g.: When he picked up the phone we got cut off.
- ✓ an achievement based on something that has been built up beforehand:
E.g.: She got elected.
- ✓ an achievement in the face of difficulty:
E.g.: I finally got admitted to hospital.

In other cases, it is possible to choose between "be" and "get" fairly freely:

E.g.: I am not going to get / be tricked.

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While in other cases it is not so:

*E.g.: The house is being redecorated. NOT * is getting redecorated*

6. Verbs which we use with a full infinitive only in passive constructions**Active constructions:**

Verb + "that" + clause:

E.g.: People say that he was fiddling the books.

Verb + bare infinitive + clause:

E.g.: They made him clear up the mess.

Passive constructions:

Verb + full infinitive + clause:

E.g.: He was said to have been fiddling the books.

E.g.: He was made to clear up the mess.

7. Passive constructions with it as the subject

Particularly in formal, written styles, verbs such as

believe, consider, say, think, estimate, understand, ...

are often used in passive constructions with an impersonal subject (IT):

E.g.: It is expected that individuals make their own housing arrangements.

8. Reduced relative clauses**Unreduced relative clause:**

E.g.: Many of those in the public sector, which are financed by state and federal funds, tend to lack ...

Reduced relative clause:

E.g.: Many of those in the public sector, financed by state and federal funds, tend to lack ...

9. Prepositions after passive constructions

“By” is not the only preposition that can be used after a passive construction. In fact, we can use almost any preposition —our choice depends on the meaning we want to express:

E.g.: ... are insured for health care through private insurance schemes.

E.g.: ... which is passed onto the patient or insurer.

10. Passive constructions and adjectives

E.g.: To do this task, the class will be divided in groups of five. PASSIVE

E.g.: American health and medical services are divided between the private and the public sectors. ADJECTIVE

The past participle used in passive constructions conveys a strong sense of action and is very much part of the verb. Usually the context will make it clear which of these is the case —passive construction or adjective.

II. CAUSATIVE PASSIVES**1. Differences between standard and causative passive constructions****STANDARD PASSIVES**

☞ Subject = recipient of some action

CAUSATIVE PASSIVES

☞ Object = recipient of some action

☞ Subject = responsible for what happened, but did not do it.

2. What do we use causative passive constructions for?

We generally use causative passives when

1. we describe what we arrange for someone to do for us:

E.g.: She went to hospital and had her blood pressure taken.

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2. we describe unfortunate experiences:

E.g.: He got his leg broken playing football.

3. What do they look like?**Basic pattern:**

AUXILIARY VERB + OBJECT + PAST PARTICIPLE OF MAIN VERB*

(*Have / Get*)

If the agent is specified, it comes at the end of the clause and (generally) follows *by*.

E.g.: We had / got the whole house renovated.

E.g.: Can't we get the rubbish taken away by the council?

*The main verb can only be an object verb:

E.g.: I've had two articles published by a very important journal.

4. Choosing between *get* and *have* as auxiliary verbs***Have / Get* indistinctively:**

Have / Get to describe things we arrange to be done for us, but we tend to use *Get* when some element of difficulty or achievement is involved:

Compare: *She had her blood taken / She never managed to get her article published.*

Get (not *Have*):

To describe unfortunate experiences: *Our house got broken into last night.*

Further **INFORMATION** on the usage of passive constructions:

☞ *Practical English Usage*, entries:

- 407-414 (p. 407-414).
- 228.4 (p. 222)
- 268.3 (p. 254)
- 276.3 (p. 260)
- 90.5 (p. 88)



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- 3 (p. 3)
- 408 (p. 410)
- 117.2 (p. 102)
- 289.3 (p. 275-6)
- 440.4 (p. 454)

☞ *Advanced Grammar in Use*, units: 29-32 (p. 58, 60, 62, 64)

Further PRACTICE on the usage of passive constructions:

WORLD WIDE WEB:

http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/GRAMMAR/quizzes/passive_quiz.htm

<http://www.miguelmlllop.com/practice/intermediate/grammar/passive.htm>

http://www.impact-english.com/members/Grammar_Practice/Always/test-grammar/gr_prac_form-Passives.htm

<http://www.english-zone.com/verbs/passive8.html>

<http://www.eslgo.com/quizzes/raiderspassive.html>

<http://a4esl.org/q/f/x/xz89mgu.htm>

BOOKS:

- ☞ *Proficiency Gold Coursebook*, p. 81-83 (+ *Grammar Reference*, p. 208).
- ☞ *Progress to Proficiency*, p. 68, 185.
- ☞ *Paths to Proficiency*, p. 169-172.
- ☞ *The Nelson Proficiency Course*, p. 68-69.
- ☞ *Focus on Proficiency*, p. 13, 18.
- ☞ *Exploring Grammar in Context*, p. 95-102.
- ☞ *Advanced Grammar in Use*, p. 59, 61, 63, 65.