

PASSIVE VOICE (BRITISH COUNCIL)

Grammar explanation

We use the passive voice to change the focus of the sentence.

My bike was stolen. (passive – focus on *my bike*)
Someone stole my bike. (active – focus on *someone*)

We often use the passive:

- when we prefer not to mention who or what does the action (for example, it's not known, it's obvious or we don't want to say)
- so that we can start a sentence with the most important or most logical information
- in more formal or scientific writing.

How we make the passive

We make the passive using the verb *be* + past participle. We start the sentence with the object.

Avatar	was	directed by James Cameron.
↓	↓	↓
Object	+ <i>be</i> +	past participle

Only the form of *be* changes to make the tense. The past participle stays the same. Here are examples of the passive in its most common tenses.

Tense	Example	Structure
Present simple	<i>Alioli is made from oil, garlic and salt.</i>	<i>is/are</i> + past participle
Present continuous	<i>The hall is being painted this week.</i>	<i>is/are being</i> + past participle
Past simple	<i>John F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963.</i>	<i>was/were</i> + past participle
Past continuous	<i>The signs were being put up last week.</i>	<i>was/were being</i> + past participle
Present perfect	<i>Oranges have been grown here for centuries.</i>	<i>has/have been</i> + past participle
Past perfect	<i>When he got home, he found that his flat had been burgled.</i>	<i>had been</i> + past participle
Future simple	<i>The work will be finished next week.</i>	<i>will be</i> + past participle