

Forming the passive voice

The passive voice is not a tense in English. Each tense has its own passive voice which is created by using a form of the **auxiliary verb** to be + V3 (past participle) The passive voice in each tense:

| Tense | Auxiliary verb + sample V3 (past participle) | Examples |
|---------------------|--|--|
| Present simple | am, is, are + made | Wine is made from grapes. Many cars are made in Japan. |
| Present progressive | am, is, are + being + sent | The document is being sent right now. I am being sent to work in the London office. |
| Past simple | was, were + invited | John was invited to speak at the conference. We were invited to Daniel and Mary's wedding. |
| Past progressive | was, were + being + washed | The dog was being washed when I got home. Their cars were being washed while they were in the mall shopping. |
| Future (will) | will be + signed | The contract will be signed tomorrow. The documents will all be signed by next week. |
| Future (going to) | am, is, are + going to be + built | A bridge is going to be built within the next two years. New houses are going to be built in our neighborhood. |

| Tense | Auxiliary verb + sample V3 (past participle) | Examples |
|----------------------|--|---|
| Present perfect | has, have + been + sold | That start-up has been sold for \$5 million. The rights to his book have been sold for \$250,000. |
| Past perfect | had + been + hired | The new manager had been hired before John left the company. All the employees had hired before the store opened. |
| Future perfect | will + have been + finished | The car will have been loaded by the time he gets home. The crates will have been loaded by then. |
| Modals: can/could | can, could + be + issued | A passport can only be issued at the embassy. He said the documents could be issued within the week. |
| Modal: have to | have to, has to, had to + be + arranged | A babysitter has to be arranged for this evening. Joan's travel plans have to be arranged by December. |
| Modal: must | must + be + stopped | Criminals must be stopped before they commit crimes. |

All of the rules for passive negatives and questions are the same as for the active voice. Note: **Verbs** that have no object (no one to "receive" the action) cannot be put into the passive, such as, arrive, come, die, exist, go, happen, have, live, occur sleep, etc.

Exercise

Fill in the correct passive form of the verb in parentheses.

1. After the earthquake, aid was sent to the people of Haiti. (sent)
2. The electricity was cut off because the bill hadn't been paid. (not pay)
1. Penicillin _____ by Alexander Fleming in 1928. (discover)
2. Statements _____ from all the witnesses at this moment. (take)
3. Whales _____ by an international ban on whaling. (must protect)
4. Both weddings _____ by Good Taste. (cater)
5. A Picasso _____ from the Metropolitan Museum of Art. (steal)
6. _____ this washing machine _____ in Germany? (make)
7. Tea _____ in China. (grow)
8. When we reached the airport, we found that all the flights _____ due to the storm. (cancel)
9. The fax _____ until tomorrow morning. (not send)
10. The soundtrack of a movie _____ always _____ after the filming is finished. (is/add)