## ACTIVE AND PASSIVE VOICE

All the pervious examples of the passive voice were in past tense (e.g. A nest was built by the bird), but you can have the passive voice with any of the tenses that you have already learned.

The passive voice as you have seen is made by using a part of the verb 'to be' and the past participle, and the different tenses in the passive are made by using different parts of the verb 'to be.'

**Simple Present**

| Active Voice | Passive Voice |
|---|---|
| *My aunt sells cloth.* | *Cloth is sold by my aunt.* |
| *Ghanaian farmers grow cocoa.* | *Cocoa is grown by Ghanaian farmers.* |
| *An electric fire warns the room.* | *The room is warned by an electric fire.* |
| *Cats eat mice.* | *Mice are eaten by cats.* |
| *Do cats eat mice?* | *Are mice are eaten by cats?* |

**Simple Future**

In the simple future tense, we use *will* (or *shall*) *be* and *the past participle* of the active verb.

| Active Voice | Passive Voice |
|---|---|
| *The cat will catch the mouse.* | *The mouse will be caught by the cat.* |
| *I'm afraid the fire will destroy those houses.* | *I'm afraid those houses would be destroyed by the fire.* |
| *Will the cat catch the mouse?* | *Will the mouse be caught by the cat?* |
| *We shall finish the work.* | *The work shall be finished by us.* |

**Present Perfect**

| Active Voice | Passive Voice |
| --- | --- |
| *The boys have eaten some of the cakes.* | *Some of the cakes have been eaten by the boys.* |
| *Have the boys eaten some of the cakes?* | *Have some of the cakes been eaten by the boys?* |

**Past Perfect**

| Active Voice | Passive Voice |
| --- | --- |
| *The boys had eaten some of the cakes before the party began.* | *Some of the cakes had been eaten by the boys before the party began.* |
| *Had the boys eaten some of the cakes?* | *Had some of the cakes been eaten by the boys?* |

The other tenses are not so commonly used, but here is an example of each:

| | |
| --- | --- |
| **Future Perfect** | |
| *The owner will have closed his shop by six o'clock.* | *The shop will have been closed by the owner by six o'clock.* |
| **Present Continuous** | |
| *The farmer is ploughing the field.* | *The field is being ploughed by the farmer.* |
| **Past Continuous** | |
| *The farmer was ploughing the field.* | *The field was being ploughed by the farmer.* |
| **Future Continuous** | |
| *All next week the workmen will be painting our house.* | *All next week, our house will be being painted by the workmen.* |

**Omission of the Doer of the Action.**

Have you noticed how awkward the passive forms sound? Compare the active and passive examples above and you will see that the active forms are shorter and neater in every case.

In English, the active is the normal form of ordinary use, i.e. we put the doer of the action as the subject of the sentence unless we have a special reason for not doing so. It is when we want to emphasize the result of the action, or draw attention to the receiver or sufferer of the action, that we use the passive form. "Why are you sad?" "My dog's been run over." The death of the dog is what interests us here. Sometimes we have to use the passive because we don't even know the doer of the action, e.g. 'Sir, I can't clean the blackboard because the duster's been removed.'

In these instances where we want to give greater emphasis to the receiver of the action but still want to know the doer, we have to use the complete passive form, e.g. 'Chief Fadaka, your car has been towed away by the police.'

Below are some examples of the passive which sound better with the doer of the action omitted.

| Active Voice | Passive Voice |
|---|---|
| *People speak English all over the world.* | *English is spoken all over the world.* |
| *Somebody built this house in 1500.* | *This house was built in 1500.* |
| *Must I answer all the questions?* | *Must all the questions be answered?* |
| *Somebody printed the book in London.* | *The book was printed in London.* |