

**General**

The active and passive are ways of using the verb. For the passive, you need to think about two things – form and use;

**Form**

To be + past participle

Choose a tense for 'to be', (it can be any one) then add the past participle.

Past participles are not the past; it is a grammar name. Most are just the verb with 'ed' on the end eg talk/talked. However, the most important verbs in English are often different (irregular) eg write/written.

After modals (could, should, may etc), just use 'be' and a past participle.

**Use**

In the active, the **subject<sup>1</sup>** 'does' the verb. In the passive, someone/thing else 'does' the verb.

**Compare sentences**

Look at some examples of similar sentences. These should help you see this different idea of the verb, and see the 3 main uses of the passive, given below;

You use the passive to change the focus of a **sentence<sup>2</sup>**;

You use it when you **don't know or care who did something<sup>3</sup>**;

You can use it to **sound formal<sup>4</sup>**.

**Focus<sup>5</sup>**

The subject of any sentence in English is always important;

In the active, what this subject does is the focus. In the first sentence, the focus is on the government.

In the passive, what happens to this subject is the focus. In the second sentence, the focus is on smoking.

**Form**

Tense	To be	Past participle
Present simple	am/is/are	written
Past simple	was/were	
Present perfect	has/have been	
Future perfect	will have been	
Modals	could be	

**Use**

**ACTIVE**

**He<sup>1</sup>** wrote a report.

**PASSIVE**

A report<sup>1</sup> was written. [by him]

**Compare sentences**

Bill Gates founded Microsoft in 1975.

Microsoft<sup>2</sup> was founded in 1975. [by Bill Gates]

A man has shot the president.

The president has been shot<sup>2/3</sup>.

We will look at these problems in the second part.

These problems will be looked at in the second part<sup>4</sup>.

**Focus**

**The government<sup>5</sup>** should ban smoking.

**Smoking<sup>5</sup>** should be banned.