

# The Passive



Chenonceau castle was built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

**Was built** is *passive*.

The choice of active or passive depends on our point of view:

When we use an active verb, we say *what the subject does*:

Thomas Bohier **built** the castle in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.  
*object*

When we use a passive verb, we say *what happens to the subject*:

The castle **was built** in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.  
*subject*

## 1. Formation and use

The passive is **a form *be* + past participle**.

The rules about when to use the different tenses are the same as in the active.

	<i>subject</i>	<i>form of be</i>	<i>past participle</i>
<i>Passive infinitive</i>	Letters	(to) be	written.
<i>Present simple</i>	Letters	are	written.
<i>Present progressive</i>	Letters	are being	written.
<i>Past simple</i>	Letters	were	written.
<i>Past progressive</i>	Letters	were being	written.
<i>Present perfect</i>	Letters	have been	written.
<i>Past perfect</i>	Letters	had been	written.
<i>will-Future</i>	Letters	will be	written.
<i>modal auxiliaries</i>	Letters	can be	written.
	Letters	should be	written.
	Letters	must have been	written.

## The passive of verbs with two objects

Some verbs with two objects:

to give

to show

to pay                    somebody (*indirect object*) something (*direct object*)

to promise

to offer

to tell

When a verb has two objects, the indirect object of the active sentence usually becomes the subject of the passive sentence.

	<i>subject</i>	<i>verb</i>	<i>indirect object</i>	<i>direct object</i>
<i>active:</i>	Jeff	gave	her	a book.
<i>passive:</i>	She	was given		a book.
<i>passive:</i>	A book	was given	to her.	

[*Translation:* Man/Jemand gab ihr ein Buch.]

The agency offered Kelly a TV role.

Kelly was offered a TV role.

A TV role was offered to Kelly.

The agency promised Kelly a film part, too.

She was promised a film part, too.

A film part was promised to her, too.

> CEG, p. 80