

UNIT 9

THE PASSIVE (to be + past participle)

Form

We form the passive with the verb **to be** and the past participle of the main verb.

| Active | Passive |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| He washes the car. | The car is washed . |
| He washed the car. | The car was washed . |
| He has washed the car. | The car has been washed . |
| He will wash the car. | The car will be washed . |

Use

- We use the passive when we want to show that the action of the verb is more important than the person who carries out the action.

*The bank robber **was caught** yesterday. (The action is more important than the person who caught the bank robber.)*

CHANGING FROM ACTIVE INTO PASSIVE

| | | | |
|---------|---------|-----------|---------|
| active | subject | verb | object |
| | Kim | baked | a cake. |
| passive | subject | verb | agent |
| | A cake | was baked | by Kim. |

- The object of the active sentence becomes the subject in the passive sentence.
- The active verb changes into a passive form.
- The subject of the active sentence becomes the agent.

Study the following table:

| | active | passive |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| present simple | She cleans the house. | The house is cleaned . |
| past simple | She cleaned the house. | The house was cleaned . |
| present perfect simple | She has cleaned the house. | The house has been cleaned . |
| future simple | She will clean the house. | The house will be cleaned . |
| modal | She must clean the house. | The house must be cleaned . |

- We form questions by putting the verb **to be** before the subject.
Was the car made in Japan?
- The **agent** (the person who carries out the action) is introduced with **by** and is mentioned only when the identity of the agent **is important** or **needs to be stated**.
*The telephone **was invented by Alexander Graham Bell**. (The identity of the agent is important.)*
- The agent is not mentioned when:
 - it is unknown.
Don's van was damaged in the car park. (We don't know who damaged Don's van.)
 - it is unimportant.
Spaghetti is eaten in Italy. (The agent is unimportant.)
 - it is obvious from the context.
The mail has been delivered. (It is obvious who did it – the postman.)