

GRAMMAR · LESSON 16 · B1

The leather is dyed by hand. The tiles were designed 400 years ago.

Passive Voice — present & past simple

The passive voice puts the **action** first and the **doer** second — or leaves the doer out entirely. It is how English talks about processes, discoveries, rules, and news.

☐ 50 min

☐ Passive

☐ CEFR B1

☐ Ages 11-16

What you'll learn

- Form **present simple passive** (is/are + V3) and **past simple passive** (was/were + V3).
- Know **when** to use passive: agent unknown, unimportant, obvious, or formal register.
- Use **by + agent** when the doer needs mentioning. Transform active → passive and back.

1

WARM-UP · 4 MIN

Who does it? Does it matter?

- | | |
|----|--|
| Q1 | Your school was built in which year? ("It was built in ...") |
| Q2 | What languages are spoken in your city? |
| Q3 | Name a food that is made in your country and exported. |
| Q4 | Think of a famous building. When was it built? By whom? |

2

GRAMMAR FOCUS · 18 MIN

Active vs passive

In an **active** sentence, the subject does the action. In a **passive** sentence, the subject *receives* the action. The doer goes into a 'by' phrase or disappears.

ACTIVE	PASSIVE
Workers dye the leather by hand.	The leather is dyed by hand.
An artist designed these tiles in 1620.	These tiles were designed by an artist in 1620.

How to form the passive

PRESENT SIMPLE PASSIVE	PAST SIMPLE PASSIVE
<p>am / is / are + past participle (V3)</p> <p>Tea is grown in China.</p> <p>These cars are made in Germany.</p> <p>Neg: It isn't sold online.</p> <p>Q: Is rice grown here?</p>	<p>was / were + past participle (V3)</p> <p>The tower was built in 1889.</p> <p>These letters were written in 1945.</p> <p>Neg: I wasn't told.</p> <p>Q: Was it checked?</p>

When to use passive

UNKNOWN	<p>We don't know who did it.</p> <p>My bike was stolen last night.</p>
UNIMPORTANT	<p>It doesn't matter who — the process matters.</p> <p>Rice is grown in many countries.</p>
OBVIOUS	<p>Everyone knows who does it.</p> <p>He was arrested last week. (= by police)</p>
FORMAL	<p>Academic, news, scientific contexts.</p> <p>The experiment was conducted in 2023.</p>
BY + AGENT	<p>When you DO want to name the doer.</p> <p>This song was written by a 15-year-old.</p>

⚠ Three classic B1 mistakes

- ❑ ~~The book written in 1960.~~ ❑ **The book was written in 1960.** (Don't forget the 'be' verb.)
- ❑ ~~The cake was make by my sister.~~ ❑ **The cake was made by my sister.** (Use past participle V3.)
- ❑ ~~English is speak in many countries.~~ ❑ **English is spoken in many countries.** (Irregular V3: speak → spoken.)

3

KEY VOCABULARY · 6 MIN

Ten words for making and creating

Word	POS	Meaning	Example
to produce	<i>v</i>	to make or manufacture	<i>Olive oil is produced in Mediterranean countries.</i>
to manufacture	<i>v</i>	to make goods in a factory	<i>These trainers are manufactured in Vietnam.</i>
process	<i>n</i>	a series of steps	<i>The dyeing process takes three days.</i>
raw material	<i>n</i>	basic material before processing	<i>Wool is a raw material for clothes.</i>
handmade	<i>adj</i>	made by a person, not a machine	<i>These plates are handmade.</i>
to export	<i>v</i>	to send goods to another country	<i>Coffee is exported from Brazil.</i>
to import	<i>v</i>	to bring goods from abroad	<i>Electronics are imported from East Asia.</i>
ingredient	<i>n</i>	one thing used to make a product	<i>The ingredients are mixed by hand.</i>
to discover	<i>v</i>	to find for the first time	<i>Penicillin was discovered in 1928.</i>
tradition	<i>n</i>	a custom passed down through generations	<i>This pottery tradition is kept alive by local families.</i>

4

READING · 12 MIN

It Is Made by Hand

It Is Made *by Hand*THE PULSE · ISSUE 18
INSIDE THE WORKSHOPS OF FEZ

Amira, 15, lives in Fez — a city where things are still made the way they were made centuries ago. Her school project on traditional crafts turned into a lesson in passive voice.

A

Amira, 15

Fez · Morocco

"The hides are soaked in lime. They are dyed using natural pigments. The process mattered. The person didn't."

At the tannery, a worker told her: "The hides **are soaked** in lime for three days. Then they **are washed** and **are dyed** using natural pigments — saffron for yellow, mint for green, poppy for red." He never said "I soak." He said "they **are soaked**." The process mattered. The person didn't.

At the pottery workshop: "This clay **is collected** from the hills. It **is shaped** on a wheel, **is dried** in the sun, and **is fired** in a kiln at over 1,000 degrees." Every verb was passive: **is + past participle**.

The tile workshop told a story about history. "These zellige patterns **were designed** in the 14th century. The technique **was brought** to Morocco **by** Andalusian craftsmen. The same shapes **are still used** today." (*Past passive for history; present passive for what continues; "by" names the agent.*)

At a brass workshop, an old man said: "I **was taught by** my father. He **was taught by** his father. The skill **is passed down** through families. It **has been done** this way for five hundred years."

Walking home, Amira understood: active sentences name the doer ("**The potter shapes** the clay"). Passive sentences name the receiver ("The clay **is shaped**"). In Fez, everyone wants you to notice the **craft**, not the craftsman.

... FOUR MORE CRAFT STORIES ...

R

Riku, 14 · Kyoto · Japan

Matcha

"The tea leaves **are grown** in shade, **are picked** by hand, **are steamed**, **are dried**, and **are ground** into powder. The process **was developed** hundreds of years ago."

E Elena, 15 · Murano · Italy

Glass

"Murano glass **is blown** by master craftsmen. The sand **is heated** to 1,500°C. In the 13th century, glassmakers **were moved** to Murano island — they **were forced** to live here to keep techniques secret."

K Kwame, 13 · Kumasi · Ghana

Kente

"Kente cloth **is woven** on narrow looms by hand. Each strip **is sewn** together. The patterns **are named** — each has a meaning. Kente **was originally worn** only by royalty."

S Sofia, 14 · Oaxaca · Mexico

Chocolate

"Cacao **was first used** by the Maya thousands of years ago. The beans **are roasted, are ground** on a stone metate, and **are mixed** with spices. In Oaxaca, chocolate **is still prepared** this way."

5

PRACTICE · 8 MIN

8 quick choices

1	Coffee ____ in Brazil. · A) grows B) is grown C) is grow
2	The Taj Mahal ____ in the 17th century. · A) built B) is built C) was built
3	This cheese ____ from goat's milk. · A) is made B) made C) is make
4	The windows ____ by the storm last night. · A) are broken B) were broken C) broken
5	Three languages ____ in Switzerland. · A) speak B) is spoken C) are spoken
6	Penicillin ____ by Fleming in 1928. · A) was discovered B) discovered C) is discovered
7	The homework ____ yet. (negative) · A) isn't check B) hasn't been checked C) didn't checked
8	Which is passive? · A) She wrote a letter. B) He ate the cake. C) The car was repaired.

6

SPEAKING · 5 MIN

How is it made?

Q 1	Describe how your favourite food is made (4+ passive sentences).
Q 2	A famous invention: when was it invented? By whom?
Q 3	Three things in this room that were made in another country.
Q 4	What is recycled in your city? What isn't?
Q 5	Transform: 'Someone stole my phone.' → Passive?

7

WRITING · 10 MIN

"A product from my country"

8

COMPREHENSION QUIZ · 6 MIN

10 questions

1	Rice ___ in many Asian countries. · A) grows B) is grown C) is grow D) grown
2	The pyramids ___ thousands of years ago. · A) are built B) were built C) built D) was built
3	This letter ___ by my grandmother in 1952. · A) wrote B) was written C) is written D) written
4	Portuguese ___ in Brazil and Portugal. · A) speaks B) is spoken C) are spoken D) spoken
5	The match ___ because of the rain yesterday. · A) cancelled B) was cancelled C) is cancelled D) cancels
6	These shoes ___ in Italy. · A) make B) made C) are made D) were make
7	The Mona Lisa ___ by Leonardo da Vinci. · A) painted B) was painted C) is painted D) were painted
8	Millions of emails ___ every day. · A) send B) are sent C) is sent D) sent
9	I ___ about the exam change. · A) wasn't told B) didn't told C) am not told D) isn't told
10	Which is ACTIVE? · A) The window was broken. B) Spanish is spoken here. C) They built a new bridge. D) The cake was eaten.



ANSWER KEYS

Check your answers

Practice · Part 5

1	B — is grown	<i>Present passive.</i>
2	C — was built	<i>Past passive.</i>
3	A — is made	<i>Present passive. V3 of make = made.</i>
4	B — were broken	<i>Past passive (last night).</i>
5	C — are spoken	<i>Plural subject = are spoken.</i>
6	A — was discovered	<i>Past passive + by.</i>
7	B — hasn't been checked	<i>Present perfect passive (preview).</i>
8	C — The car was repaired	<i>Passive: subject receives action.</i>

Quiz · Part 8

1	B — is grown	<i>Present passive.</i>
2	B — were built	<i>Past passive (plural).</i>
3	B — was written	<i>Past passive + by.</i>
4	B — is spoken	<i>Present passive (singular).</i>
5	B — was cancelled	<i>Past passive.</i>
6	C — are made	<i>Present passive (plural).</i>
7	B — was painted	<i>Past passive + by.</i>
8	B — are sent	<i>Present passive (plural).</i>
9	A — wasn't told	<i>Past passive negative.</i>
10	C — They built a new bridge	<i>Active: subject (they) does the action.</i>

Excellent work on Lesson 16! You now form the passive in two core tenses: *is/are* + V3 for the present and *was/were* + V3 for the past. You know when to use it, how to add 'by + agent', and how to spot the three classic mistakes. In **Lesson 17**, we expand: **Passive Voice in other tenses** — present perfect, future, and modals.