# The passive

## Before you start

1 Review these intermediate grammar points and check you know them.

#### Passive forms of tenses

- 1 These are more common in writing than in spoken English.
- **2** We make the passive form of verbs in all tenses by using *be* in the appropriate tense plus the past participle of the main verb:

A password is used to access the site. (The customer uses a password to access the site.) My bag was stolen. (A thief stole my bag.)

The murder is being investigated. (The police are investigating the murder.) The show has been cancelled. (The organisers have cancelled the show.) Drinks will be served in the interval. (The waiters will serve drinks.)

**3** It is possible to make passive forms of the perfect continuous tenses, but we prefer to use an active form and an impersonal subject, e.g. *they/one*: [By next month the murder will have been being investigated for over a year.]

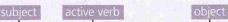
✓ By next month they will have been investigating the murder for over a year.

#### Passive modals

| FORM   | ACTIVE  | PASSIVE   |
|--|---|---|
| modal verbs:<br>verb + be + past participle              | Candidates <b>must answer</b> all the questions. They <b>have to take</b> a test. | All the questions must be answered. A test has to be taken.       |
| modal perfects:<br>verb + have been + past<br>participle | Someone might have stolen it.<br>The jury ought to have<br>convicted him.         | It might have been stolen.<br>He ought to have been<br>convicted. |

### Subjects and agents

1 In this active sentence *the judge* is the subject of the active verb and *the names of the winners* is the object:



The judge will read out the names of the winners in alphabetical order.

In the passive equivalent *the names of the winners* becomes the subject of the passive verb and *the judge* becomes the agent (the person or thing that causes the action of the passive verb):



The names of the winners will be read out in alphabetical order (by the judge).

**2** We often don't mention the agent in the passive, but if we do it is introduced with by.