

4 Verbs with two objects

Some active verbs have a **direct** and an **indirect** object:

*They offered **the customer** **a refund**.*

Either object can become the subject of the passive verb:

*The customer **was offered** a refund. A refund **was offered to** the customer.*

If the object of the passive verb is the indirect object of the active verb it is usually introduced with a preposition, e.g. *to the customer* (► Unit 42.3).

5 Verbs not used in the passive

Verbs with no direct object (intransitive verbs)	<p>✗ <i>The visitors were arrived early.</i> ✓ <i>The visitors arrived early.</i> ✗ <i>The plane has been landed.</i> ✓ <i>The plane has landed.</i></p>
Certain verbs followed by (object +) to + infinitive verb, such as want (him to leave), refuse (to answer)	<p>✗ <i>He was wanted to leave.</i> ✓ <i>She wanted him to leave.</i> ✗ <i>Your questions are refused to answer.</i> ✓ <i>I refuse to answer your questions.</i></p>
Certain verbs describing states, such as have (= own), be, belong, lack, resemble, pretend and seem	<p>✗ <i>A Ferrari is had by John.</i> ✓ <i>John has a Ferrari.</i> ✗ <i>Marilyn Monroe is resembled by her.</i> ✓ <i>She resembles Marilyn Monroe.</i></p>
have + noun to describe an action e.g. have a shower, have lunch	<p>✗ <i>Lunch is being had by John.</i> ✓ <i>John's having lunch.</i></p>

For *make/let* ► Unit 63.3

6 Reasons for using the passive

We often use the passive

- when the agent is not relevant, or not known:
*Wars **have been fought** throughout history.* (Who fought them is not important here.)
*I think the old house **has been demolished**.* (We don't know who did it.)
- when the agent is obvious from the context or from general knowledge:
*The parcel's **being delivered** at midday.* (obviously by the delivery company)
- when we want to be less direct, or more polite in a formal situation. Compare:
Will you grant our application for planning permission? (direct question)
***Will** our application for planning permission **be granted**?* (more polite/less direct)
- when we want to describe general feelings, opinions and beliefs (► Unit 63.1):
*Rio de Janeiro **has been described as** the most beautiful city in the Americas.*
*São Paulo **is said to be** the fastest-growing city in South America.*

Sometimes we know the identity of the agent, but we don't want to mention it because we don't want to blame a specific person, or we want to avoid personal responsibility:

*I see the washing-up **hasn't been done**. Oh dear, look, the vase **has been broken**.*

7 Using passives in writing

ACADEMIC ENGLISH In written English we often use the passive to

- focus on the issues rather than on the people involved:
*The research **was carried out** over a period of six months.*
- describe rules and procedures:
*Answers **must be written** in ink. Candidates **will be interviewed** in alphabetical order.*
- describe commercial, industrial and scientific processes:
*Minutes **are taken** and then **submitted** to the chair for approval.*
*Components **are electronically tagged and transported** to the production line.*
- describe historical, economic and social processes:
*Tribal lands **were sold** years ago. The currency **has been devalued** twice since 1980.*

Using the passive to order information ► Unit 77.5