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Active and passive voice

Part 2 · Reporting results and responsibility





Grammar at a glance

When you want to...	Form to use	Worked example
Report a result or future event	has been / will be + participle	It has been fixed. It will be tested.
Keep the modal meaning	modal + be + participle	The rope must be replaced.
Leave unknown doers open	passive / someone + active verb	The window was shut. Someone shut it.
Show responsibility	by + known doer	The bridge was inspected by Noor.

SELECT A ROW TO OPEN ITS LESSON

ACTIVE AND PASSIVE VOICE

Perfect passives and future reports



At the current inspection, the log confirms that Lily has watered the plant. Yesterday she had watered a different plant before visitors arrived. Tomorrow's schedule says the team will check the tools before opening.

Has been repaired presents a completed repair connected with now. Will be repaired locates the repair in the future.

USE	EXAMPLE	WHAT TO NOTICE
Completed by now	The plant has been watered by Lily.	Has been + participle preserves present perfect. The log establishes completion before the current inspection.
Before a past arrival	The other plant had been watered before visitors arrived.	Had been + participle places completion before another past event. This is a separate plant and log.
Tomorrow's schedule	The tools will be checked before opening tomorrow.	Will be + participle projects a future event. A schedule does not prove that the check has already happened.

HOW THE PATTERN WORKS

Completion before now	Completion before a past point	Projected future action
has been watered	had been watered	will be checked

Can been and being be swapped without changing anything?

No. Has been watered is a perfect passive; is being watered is a continuous passive. Preserve the complete original tense-and-aspect meaning rather than recognising only the final participle.

YOUR TURN

Choose the present-perfect passive.

has being repaired / has been repaired

> Answer • has been repaired
> Perfect have takes been here.

ACTIVE AND PASSIVE VOICE

Modal strength, questions and negatives

The opening rule requires the team to check the tools. A supervisor asks whether Sam checked the gate yesterday, and the log says Sam did not check it. These messages express an obligation, a question and a negative fact.

Keep the modal meaning. Must be repaired expresses a requirement. Might be repaired leaves the outcome uncertain.

USE	EXAMPLE	WHAT TO NOTICE
Preserve the obligation	The tools must be checked by the team.	Must be + participle preserves the requirement. Might be checked would weaken it to a possibility.
Preserve the question	Was the gate checked by Sam yesterday?	Was moves before the subject. The question does not assert that the check occurred.
Preserve the negative	The gate was not checked by Sam yesterday.	Not stays in the report. This says Sam did not perform the check; it does not rule out another checker.

HOW THE PATTERN WORKS

Requirement	Past question	Named-doer negative
must be checked	Was the gate checked?	was not checked by Sam

Does preserving passive structure guarantee preserving meaning?

No. Modal strength, negation, question status and time can all change independently. Check those features as well as subject, participle and by phrase.

YOUR TURN

Choose the complete modal passive.

must be repaired / must repaired

> Answer • must be repaired
> Include be after the modal.

ACTIVE AND PASSIVE VOICE

Unknown agents, useful omissions and limits of transformation

A parcel arrived at the desk. The log confirms that someone delivered it, but nobody identified the deliverer. A separate note says Sam arrived at noon. Another record confirms that Noor gave Lily a map.

Omit the doer when it is unknown or irrelevant. If an active rewrite needs a subject, someone can preserve uncertainty.

USE	EXAMPLE	WHAT TO NOTICE
Unknown doer	The parcel was delivered at 10:00.	The passive foregrounds the parcel without naming an unconfirmed deliverer. The delivery log, not the picture, supplies 10:00.
No direct object	Sam arrived at noon.	Arrived has no direct object here. Do not force “Sam was arrived” as the ordinary passive of this sentence.
Two possible subjects	Lily was given a map by Noor.	Give has two objects here. Lily or the map can become a passive subject, with the appropriate complete construction.

HOW THE PATTERN WORKS

Unknown agent preserved
was delivered to
someone delivered

No direct object here
Sam arrived

Two passive starting points
Lily was given / a map was given to Lily

Does omitting a by phrase always mean the doer is unknown?

No. A schedule may omit an obvious team, or a report may omit a known person because the object is its focus. Unknown in the record and unnamed in the sentence are different.

YOUR TURN

Unknown agent: choose a faithful active version of “The door was repaired”.

Sam definitely repaired the door. / Someone repaired the door.

> Answer • Someone repaired the door.
> Preserve the unknown identity.

ACTIVE AND PASSIVE VOICE

Choose voice for purpose without hiding facts

The editor has three records: Lily damaged the sign yesterday, a tool check has been completed by the team, and the window repairer is unknown. A safety review asks who damaged the sign; an opening checklist asks whether the tools are ready.

Choose the subject to fit the question. If responsibility matters and you know the doer, name that person.

USE	EXAMPLE	WHAT TO NOTICE
Responsibility matters	Lily damaged the sign yesterday.	This directly answers who caused the known damage. Removing Lily from a responsibility report would hide relevant information.
Readiness matters	The tools have been checked by the team.	The checklist starts with the tools and reports the completed check. The team can remain named without taking the first position.
Identity remains unknown	The window was repaired.	A concise passive reports the confirmed repair without inventing the unknown repairer.

HOW THE PATTERN WORKS

Accountability	Readiness focus	Unknown identity
name Lily as doer	tools have been checked	window was repaired

Is every grammatical voice transformation equally useful for every reader?

No. A sentence can be grammatical yet omit the very fact a reader needs. Preserve relevant responsibility, uncertainty and focus as well as constructing the verb group correctly.

YOUR TURN

A responsibility question needs which information?

The known doer’s identity / An omitted name in every case

> Answer • The known doer’s identity
> Name the relevant responsible person.

ONE LAST CHALLENGE

Can you report only what you know?

A window has been repaired. No one knows who did the work. Write a passive report and a faithful active version.



A POSSIBLE ANSWER

The window has been repaired. Someone has repaired the window.

Someone supplies a subject without assigning the repair to a named person.

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