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Grammar – Passive Voice

Practice Passive Voice in Past Tenses

Passive voice = BE + PAST PARTICIPLE (3rd form). Passive voice actions are done by people who are **unknown** or **unimportant**. In **past tenses and forms**, passive voice is made as follows:

Past Simple Passive	The meeting was planned .
Past Continuous Passive	The meeting was being planned .
Past Perfect Passive	The meeting had been planned .
Past Perfect Continuous Passive	The meeting had been being planned . (rare)
Third Conditional Passive	If the meeting had been planned , I would have gone.
Mixed Conditional Passive 1 (past/pres)	If the meeting had been planned , I'd be there now.
Mixed Conditional Passive 2 (pres/past)	If the meeting was planned , I would have gone.
Modal Past Passive	The meeting could / would / had to / might be planned .
Modal Perfect Passive	It could've / would've / should've been planned .
going to (past)	The meeting had been going to be planned .

We normally use passive voice in **formal** spoken and written contexts. We don't normally use it to talk about everyday **informal** actions, e.g. I read a book today. = ~~A book was read [by me] today.~~

Passive voice is most often seen / heard in the following contexts:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| A. business English | E. natural disasters |
| B. creative arts | F. invention / discovery |
| C. production | G. historical events |
| D. crime and punishment | H. life story / obituary |

Write sentences using the prompts. **Embellish** where possible. Say which context they belong to A-H:

- | | | | | | |
|-----|---|-------------|------------------------------|---|-------|
| 1. | + | pa sim | guy, company, blackmail | A few companies were blackmailed by the same guy. | D |
| 2. | - | pa con | recruit, yesterday, train | _____ | _____ |
| 3. | ? | pa perf | Lombardy, bridge, construct | _____ | _____ |
| 4. | + | pa perf con | birthday, night, celebrate | _____ | _____ |
| 5. | - | third con | hear, song, write | _____ | _____ |
| 6. | ? | mix con 1 | order, parts, here | _____ | _____ |
| 7. | + | mix con 2 | know, kidnap | _____ | _____ |
| 8. | - | modal pa | design, Laurent, poster | _____ | _____ |
| 9. | ? | modal perf | handle, meeting, better | _____ | _____ |
| 10. | + | going to pa | devastate, land, floods | _____ | _____ |
| 11. | - | pa sim | defeat, Waterloo, Wellington | _____ | _____ |
| 12. | ? | pa con | develop, spacecraft, first | _____ | _____ |
| 13. | + | pa perf | lay waste to, Tulsa, cyclone | _____ | _____ |
| 14. | - | pa perf con | notes, forum, take | _____ | _____ |
| 15. | ? | third con | elect, care, anybody | _____ | _____ |
| 16. | + | mix con 1 | train, better off, properly | _____ | _____ |
| 17. | - | mix con 2 | inform, role, cast | _____ | _____ |
| 18. | ? | modal pa | targets, biodiversity, meet | _____ | _____ |
| 19. | + | modal perf | unearth, king, now, bones | _____ | _____ |
| 20. | - | going to pa | Alice, production, supervise | _____ | _____ |

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Here are the basic answers with passive voice. Students should **embellish** each sentence to make it more interesting. They could do this by adding more detail, e.g.

1. A company was blackmailed by a guy. (plain) / A few companies were blackmailed by the same guy. (embellished)

Answers may vary. Suggested answers:

1.	+	pa sim	guy, company, blackmail	A company was blackmailed by a guy.	D
2.	-	pa con	recruit, yesterday, train	The new recruits weren't being trained yesterday.	A
3.	?	pa perf	Lombardy, bridge, construct	Had the bridge been constructed in Lombardy?	C
4.	+	pa perf con	birthday, night, celebrate	Lee's birthday had been being celebrated all night.	H
5.	-	third con	hear, song, write	If the song hadn't been written, I couldn't have heard it.	B
6.	?	mix con 1	order, parts, here	If the parts had been ordered, would they be here?	C
7.	+	mix con 2	know, kidnap	If he were kidnapped we would've known about it.	D
8.	-	modal pa	design, Laurent, poster	None of the posters would be designed by Laurent.	B
9.	?	modal perf	handle, meeting, better	Could the meeting have been handled better?	A
10.	+	going to pa	devastate, land, floods	The land was going to be devastated by floods.	E
11.	-	pa sim	defeat, Waterloo, Wellington	Wellington was not defeated at Waterloo.	G
12.	?	pa con	develop, spacecraft, first	Was the first spacecraft being developed?	F
13.	+	pa perf	lay waste to, Tulsa, cyclone	Tulsa had been laid waste to by a cyclone.	E
14.	-	pa perf con	notes, forum, take	Notes hadn't been being taken during the forum.	A
15.	?	third con	elect, care, anybody	Would anybody have cared, if he had been elected?	G
16.	+	mix con 1	train, better off, properly	If he'd been properly trained, he'd be better off.	H
17.	-	mix con 2	inform, role, cast	If the role weren't cast, they would've informed me.	B
18.	?	modal pa	targets, biodiversity, meet	Did biodiversity targets have to be met?	E
19.	+	modal perf	unearth, king, now, bones	The king's bones should've been unearthed by now.	G
20.	-	going to pa	Alice, production, supervise	Production was not going to be supervised by Alice.	C