

Grammar – Passive Voice

Practice Passive Voice in Present Tenses

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

Present Simple Passive	The laptop is stolen .
Present Continuous Passive	The laptop is being stolen .
Present Perfect Passive	The laptop has been stolen .
Present Perfect Continuous Passive	The laptop has been being stolen . (rare)
Zero Conditional Passive	If the laptop is stolen , I buy a new one.
Modal Present Passive	The laptop can / must / has to / may / should be stolen .
Imperative Form Passive	Let the laptop be stolen . / You are advised / requested to steal the laptop.

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 ate toast for breakfast. = ~~Toast was eaten for breakfast.~~

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.	+	pr sim	phone, produce, China	Most mobile phones are produced in factories in China.	C
2.	-	pr con	letter, committee, approve	_____	_____
3.	?	pr perf	climate, affect, pollution	_____	_____
4.	+	pr perf con	all, life, bully	_____	_____
5.	-	zero con	meeting, organise, come	_____	_____
6.	?	modal pr	apprehend, offender, today	_____	_____
7.	+	imp form	record, track, at once	_____	_____
8.	-	pr sim	film, feature, top 10 list	_____	_____
9.	?	pr con	new species, discover	_____	_____
10.	+	pr perf	invent, lab, vaccine	_____	_____
11.	-	pr perf con	Paul, educate, Harrow	_____	_____
12.	?	zero con	case, solve, victim, satisfied	_____	_____
13.	+	modal pr	consignment, must, send	_____	_____
14.	-	imp form	oblige, report, sign	_____	_____
15.	?	pr sim	play, direct, Matt Lewis	_____	_____
16.	+	pr con	plans, draw up	_____	_____
17.	-	pr perf	book, publish	_____	_____
18.	?	pr perf con	cliffs, years, erode	_____	_____
19.	+	zero con	people, conquer, land, steal	_____	_____
20.	-	modal pr	king, impose, need, taxes	_____	_____

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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. Phones are produced in China. (plain) / Most mobile phones are produced in factories in China. (embellished)

Answers may vary. Suggested answers:

1.	+	pr sim	phone, produce, China	Phones are produced in China.	C
2.	-	pr con	letter, committee, approve	The letter isn't being approved by the committee.	A
3.	?	pr perf	climate, affect, pollution	Has the climate been affected by pollution?	E
4.	+	pr perf con	all, life, bully	He has been being bullied all his life.	H
5.	-	zero con	meeting, organise, come	If the meeting isn't organised, nobody comes.	A
6.	?	modal pr	apprehend, offender, today	Can the offender be apprehended today?	D
7.	+	imp form	record, track, at once	Let the track be recorded at once!	B
8.	-	pr sim	film, feature, top 10 list	Her film is not featured in the top 10 list.	B
9.	?	pr con	new species, discover	Are new species still being discovered?	F
10.	+	pr perf	invent, lab, vaccine	A vaccine has been invented by a lab.	F
11.	-	pr perf con	Paul, educate, Harrow	Paul has not been being educated at Harrow.	H
12.	?	zero con	case, solve, victim, satisfied	If a case is solved is the victim satisfied?	D
13.	+	modal pr	consignment, must, send	The consignment must be sent.	C
14.	-	imp form	oblige, report, sign	You are not obliged to sign this report.	A
15.	?	pr sim	play, direct, Matt Lewis	Is the play directed by Matt Lewis?	B
16.	+	pr con	plans, draw up	The plans are being drawn up.	A
17.	-	pr perf	book, publish	The book hasn't been published.	B
18.	?	pr perf con	cliffs, years, erode	Have the cliffs been being eroded for years?	E
19.	+	zero con	people, conquer, land, steal	If people are conquered their land is stolen.	G
20.	-	modal pr	king, impose, need, taxes	Taxes needn't be imposed by the king.	G

A note about Present Perfect Continuous:

It is often said that the **perfect continuous tenses** in English (**past, present, and future**) aren't used in passive voice very often, due to how awkward they seem, e.g. instead of 'He has been being bullied all his life' we could happily use **present perfect passive** instead: 'He has been bullied all his life.'

While this is true and quite right and proper, if you search online for the phrases 'have been being' and 'has been being' you will find plenty of real world examples of Present Perfect Continuous Passive 'in the wild'!

So, while it is probably better to use Present Perfect Passive rather than Present Perfect Continuous Passive, here are some cases when it could be used naturally:

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- *The (superlative) thing about X has been BEING...*
The best part of my day has been being almost tickled half to death by my grandchildren.

Also:

- *When BE is part of a collocation, e.g. BE involved in:*
Some of my happiest times have been being involved in charity work.
- *When the past participle can also be an adjective (participle adjectives):*
The worst thing has been being bored for the whole holiday.

(See also: interested, amused, embarrassed, excited, relaxed, thrilled, frightened, etc.)