

## PASSIVE OF REPORTING VERBS / IMPERSONAL PASSIVE

Verbs that refer to saying or thinking (**think, believe, say, report, know, consider, presume, hope...**) are often followed by a to-infinitive form in the passive.

Example: The police **think** he **is** in Argentina.  
He **is thought to be** in Argentina.

There are **FOUR INFINITIVE FORMS**, which we will use depending on the tense we have in the active sentence.

|                  |                             |                          |
|------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Simple           | <b>to write</b>             | escribir                 |
| Continuous       | <b>to be writing</b>        | estar escribiendo        |
| Perfect          | <b>to have written</b>      | haber escrito            |
| Perf. Continuous | <b>to have been writing</b> | haber estado escribiendo |

### IN ORDER TO MAKE THIS TYPE OF PASSIVE SENTENCE, WE

- 1 Take the subject of the second sentence: **He**
- 2 Passive verb of the Reporting verb in the same tense as in the active: **is thought**
- 3 The verb of the second sentence in the Infinitive form: **to be**

### WHICH FORM OF THE INFINITIVE DO WE USE?

- If it carries an **idea of present or future** → Simple: **to write**
- If it carries an **idea of past**, whatever the tense (Past Simple, Past Perfect, Present Perfect) → Perfect: **to have written**.
- If either of them are in a **continuous form**, you use the adequate Infinitive continuous form → **to be writing** or **to have been writing**

### SOME MORE EXAMPLES:

| ACTIVE                                                      | PASSIVE                                                        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| They <i>say</i> she <b>works</b> hard.                      | She <i>is said</i> <b>to work</b> hard.                        |
| They <i>say</i> she <b>played</b> well.                     | She <i>is said</i> <b>to have played</b> well.                 |
| They <i>said</i> she <b>has done</b> well.                  | She <i>was said</i> <b>to have done</b> well.                  |
| They <i>believe</i> he <b>is having</b> an affair.          | He <i>is believed</i> <b>to be having</b> an affair.           |
| They <i>believe</i> he <b>has been having</b> an affair.    | He <i>is believed</i> <b>to have been having</b> an affair.    |
| She <i>believes</i> the repairs <b>have been finished</b> . | The repairs <i>are believed</i> <b>to have been finished</b> . |

**GET / HAVE SOMETHING DONE (Passive Voice)**

This construction is passive in meaning. It may describe situations where we want someone else to do something for us.

**Examples**

- *I must **get / have my hair cut**.*
- *When are you going to **get that window mended**?*
- *We're **having the house painted**.*

If the verb refers to something negative or unwanted, it has the same meaning as a passive sentence:

- *Jim **had his car stolen** last night. (= Jim's car was stolen)*
- *They **had their roof blown off** in the storm. (= Their roof was blown off in the storm)*

The construction can refer to the completion of an activity, especially if a time expression is used:

- *We'll **get the work done** as soon as possible.*
- *I'll **get those letters typed** before lunchtime.*

In all these sentences, we are more interested in the **result** of the activity than in the person or object that performs the activity.

**'X' NEEDS DOING**

In the same way, this construction has a passive meaning. The important thing in our minds is the person or thing that will experience the action, e.g.

- *The ceiling **needs painting** (= the ceiling needs to be painted)*
- *My hair **needs cutting** (= my hair needs to be cut)*

**SOME VERBS HAVE SPECIAL PASSIVE FORMS:**

- **MAKE AND HELP**

They are followed by a bare infinitive in the active, but take a **to-infinitive** in the passive

|          |                                                                  |
|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Active:  | <i>Her two sisters made him <b>clean</b> the house</i>           |
| Passive: | <i>He was made <b>to clean</b> the house by her two sisters.</i> |

- **LET**

In the passive, **let** is replaced by **allowed** and is followed by a to-infinitive.

|          |                                                               |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Active:  | <i>The teacher <b>let</b> us leave early</i>                  |
| Passive: | <i>We were <b>allowed to</b> leave early (by the teacher)</i> |

- **SEE AND HEAR**

Some **verbs of the senses** can be followed by either a **to-infinitive** or a **gerund** form in the passive.

|          |                                                   |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Active:  | <i>They heard the baby <b>cry / crying</b>.</i>   |
| Passive: | <i>The baby was heard <b>to cry / crying</b>.</i> |

# EXERCISES

## IMPERSONAL PASSIVE

1. People *believe* that English **is** the most widely spoken language
  - *It is believed* that English **is** the most widely spoken language.
  - English *is believed to be* the most widely spoken language.
2. Police *have reported* that it was Peter who **caused** the accident.
  - *It has been reported* that it was Peter who **caused** the accident.
  - Peter *has been reported to have caused* the accident.
3. A journalist *reports* that they **are leaving** Las Vegas tomorrow night.
  - It \_\_\_\_\_
  - They \_\_\_\_\_
4. The lecturer *thought* that Columbus never **realized** that he had discovered America.
  - It \_\_\_\_\_
  - Columbus \_\_\_\_\_
5. Their parents *thought* that the teenagers **were dancing** at the disco.
  - It \_\_\_\_\_
  - The teenagers \_\_\_\_\_
6. Everybody *thinks* that she **sings** beautifully
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
7. The children *reported* that their friends **were swimming** when they disappeared.
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
8. People *believed* that they **had killed** the animals during the night.
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
9. My friends think that my parents are the best parents in the world.
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
10. They believed that the horse was a present.
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
11. People are thinking that drugs are very dangerous.
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
12. They knew that Mr. Brown was stealing iron from the factory.
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
13. Ancient people thought that the stars would fall on them.
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
14. People consider that the team will be classified for the final.
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
15. Everybody says that he settled the business.
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
16. The reporters believed that the meeting would finish soon.
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_

17. They have thought the sportsmen are arriving today.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

18. Citizens presume that the government is responsible for the accident.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

19. The newspapers are reporting that the most outstanding athletes represent their country.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

20. The shareholders thought that the group had rejected the offer.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

21. They say that the meeting will be held here

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

22. The hooligans expected that their team would win

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

#### MIXED TYPES

1. The students all know that Shakespeare was born in Stratford.

1 We saw the baby crawl towards the window.

2 My parents used to let me go out at night.

3 In the Middle Ages, people thought the devil sometimes got into their bodies

4 The teacher helped his students finish the exercise.

5 Reporters at the airport are expecting that the president will be arriving soon.

6 My mother always made me do the housework.

7 Football fans have thought that their team is arriving today.

8 Everybody knew that Peter had copied at his access exam.

9 Doctors consider that lung cancer will have a cure in the next fifty years.

10 The police always thought that he had escaped and that he was living in Sweden.

11 We could usually hear an opera singer singing upstairs.

12 The headmaster made them sit down and stay there until 5 o'clock.

13 The usher didn't let us go into the theatre.

14 People in the town believed that the heavy rainfall was the reason for the bursting of the dam.