

Passive voice

In English There are two **voices**: **active** and **passive**. In the **active voice**, the subject of a sentence is the *agent*, that is, the person or thing doing something. In the **passive voice**, the subject *receives* the action. The passive is used to say that something is *being done* to someone or something.

ACTIVE Emily **took** Sara home. (*Emily subject and agent*)

PASSIVE Sara **was taken** home by Emily. (*Sara subject, Emily agent*)

To make the passive, use a form of **to be** and the **past participle** of the main verb. The agent can be expressed through a **by + noun** clause (*by Emily*). Often in a passive sentence the agent is not even mentioned.

PASSIVE Sara **was taken** home at nine. (*Sara subject, no agent*)

A Circle the form of the verb **to be** and underline the **past participle** in the following passive sentences. On the column to the right, write the **agent**, or **no agent** if the sentence lacks one.

1. This dam was built by my grandfather.

AGENT

my grandfather

2. The same book was read by all students.

3. Your voice was heard over the loudspeaker.

4. The thief was arrested by the police.

5. The injured were taken to the hospital.

6. Ten roads will be built next year.

In Spanish There are also **active** and **passive** voices. There are, however, two ways to express a passive action. When you specify an agent, it is introduced by **por**. In that case, just as in English, use **ser + past participle + por + agent**.

ACTIVE Emilia **construyó** esta casa. (*Emilia subject and agent*)
Emilia built this house.

PASSIVE Esta casa **fue construida por** Emilia. (*Esta casa subject, Emilia agent*)
This house was built by Emilia.

The past participle (**construida**) must agree in number and gender with the recipient of the action (**esta casa**).

When the agent is not mentioned at all, Spanish often uses the **passive se**. This is formed using the pronoun **se** with a verb in the *third person singular or plural*.

The verb must agree in number with the recipient of the action.

PASSIVE SE Esta casa **se construyó** en 1965. (*Esta casa subject, no agent*)
This house was built in 1965.

Estos platos **se lavan** cada día. (*Estos platos subject, no agent*)
These dishes are washed every day.

PASSIVE VOICE

B In each sentence, circle the passive verb (with **ser** + participle, or with **se**). If the sentence has an agent, write it in the blank. If it lacks an agent, write **no agent** or **passive se**.

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|--|--------------------|
| 1. Este museo <u>fue construido</u> por mi abuelo. | AGENT
mi abuelo |
| 2. Esta comida fue preparada por un gran cocinero. | _____ |
| 3. En esta tienda se venden pinturas. | _____ |
| 4. Aquí sólo se come comida italiana. | _____ |
| 5. En el siglo XX se escribieron muchas novelas. | _____ |
| 6. Se construirán diez carreteras. | _____ |
| 7. El ladrón será detenido mañana. | _____ |
| 8. Las plantas fueron regadas por el jardinero. | _____ |

C Turn these active sentences into passive using **ser**. Don't forget to show agreement with the participle.

1. Mucha gente lee los periódicos.
Los periódicos son leídos por mucha gente.
2. Los vecinos decoran las casas del barrio.

3. La gente puso muchas flores en los balcones.

4. Los mayores prepararon mucha comida para los pobres.

5. Los niños limpiarán las calles después de las fiestas.

D Now write the same sentences using the **passive se**. Leave out the agent.

1. Se leen mucho los periódicos.
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____