

Unit 7

The impersonal passive

The impersonal passive is a formal way of reporting thoughts, sayings, beliefs and opinions. Verbs without an object (intransitive verb) normally cannot form a personal passive sentence (as there is no object that can become the subject of the passive sentence). If you want to use an intransitive verb in passive voice, you need an impersonal construction – therefore this passive is called *Impersonal Passive*.

Impersonal Passive is only possible with certain verbs such as say, think, prove claim and believe.

There are two ways for forming impersonal passive:

The first is:

1. using 'It'
2. changing the verb of perception into passive construction
3. using 'that'
4. writing the completion of the sentence found after 'that'

e.g. They say that women live longer than men.
It is said that women live longer than men.

They say that dolphins are highly intelligent.
It is said that dolphins are highly intelligent.

They used to think that the Earth was flat
It used to be thought that the Earth was flat.

They believe that learners will absorb the grammar as they learn the vocabulary.
It is believed that learners will absorb the grammar as they learn the vocabulary.

The second is formed with the object + infinitive.

e.g. They believe that the story is true.

The story **is believed to be** true.

The subject of the subordinate clause (the story) goes to the beginning of the sentence; the verb of perception is put into passive voice. The rest of the sentence is added using an infinitive construction with 'to' (certain auxiliary verbs and *that* are omitted).

e.g. So, People know that he is talented.
He is known to be talented.

(1)

More details:

Verbs that refer to saying or thinking (*think, believe, say, report, know, consider, hope, understand, suppose...*) 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 be used depending on the tense we have in the active sentence.

Simple	to write
Continuous	to be writing
Perfect	to have written
Perf. Continuous	to have been writing

IN ORDER TO MAKE THIS TYPE OF PASSIVE SENTENCE, WE

Take the subject of the second sentence: He

- 1 Passive verb of the Reporting verb in the same tense as in the active: is thought
- 2 The verb of the second sentence in the Infinitive form.

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

(2)

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.

Complete the second sentence so that it has the same meaning as the first.

1. People know that she is a good swimmer.
→ She
2. They say that Francis is in hospital.
→ Francis
3. They think that the children are in bed.
→ The children
4. People believe that the robber has worked in the bank.
→ The robber
5. People believe that nuclear power stations are dangerous.
→ Nuclear power stations
6. His colleagues thought that he was on holiday.
→ He
7. People know that cars pollute the environment.
→ Cars
8. They suppose that the new product will come out soon.
→ The new product
9. They found that the mission was impossible.
→ The mission
10. They believe that she will win a gold medal.
→ She

Rewrite the sentences. Use the impersonal passive in two different ways.

1. A journalist reports that they are leaving Las Vegas tomorrow night.

.....
.....

2. The lecturer thought that Columbus never realized that he had discovered America.

.....
.....

3. Their parents thought that the teenagers were dancing at the disco.

.....
.....

4. Everybody thinks that she sings beautifully.

.....
.....

5. The children reported that their friends were swimming when they disappeared.

.....
.....

6. People believed that they had killed the animals during the night.

.....
.....

7. My friends think that my parents are the best parents in the world.

.....
.....

8. They believed that the horse was a present.

.....
.....

9. People think that drugs are very dangerous.

.....
.....

10. They knew that Mr. Brown was stealing iron from the factory.

.....
.....

11. People consider that the team will be classified for the final.

.....
.....

(4)

12. Everybody says that he settled the business.

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

ليمكن أن يعطيني جملة محلولة بـ (S) ويطلب مني تحويلها إلى (it) أو العكس.

Question 1 Rewrite the following sentences so that each new sentence has the same meaning to the one before it.

1. It is believed that a happy family is what everybody wants.
A happy family.....
2. It is reported that the notorious criminal was arrested by the local police.
The notorious criminal.....
3. It is expected that this law will change sooner or later.
This law.....
4. It is known that her father is a successful lawyer.
Her father
5. It is claimed that she broke the law twice in three days.
She.....
6. It is believed that money brings happiness.
Money
7. It is expected that they will be fired from their jobs.
They

ثالثا: يمكن أن يأتي جملة من سؤال صحح الفعل:

Question 2 Write the correct form of the verb between brackets.

1. It is _____ that this sculpture is the artist's greatest work. (know)
2. Money is _____ to bring happiness. (say)
3. The tower was reported to have _____ the fire. (catch)
4. It was _____ that the road tunnels were incredible achievements. (believe)

رابعا: ممكن أن يعطيني جملة محلولة بـ (impersonal passive) ويطلب إرجاعها إلى (active)

Question 3 Rewrite the following sentences so that each new sentence has the similar meaning to the one before it.

1. It is reported that the body was identified by some relatives.
The policemen
2. It is said that Susan divorced her husband.
They
3. It is known that the government is in negotiations with the Turks.
People.....
4. It is claimed that the exams are difficult.
Students.....

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People believe that eating almonds reduces the risk of heart disease.

Eating almonds

Eating almonds is believed to reduce the risk of heart disease.

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Doing regular exercise is believed to reduce the risk of several diseases.

People believe that

People believe that doing regular exercise reduces the risk of several diseases.

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They assumed that the last Olympic Games were a great success.

It

It was assumed that the last Olympic Games were a great success.

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Experts have proved that eating fresh vegetables is good for the stomach.

Eating fresh vegetables

Eating fresh vegetables has been proved to be good for the stomach.

كتاب جديد /مستوى رابع /شتوية 2018

My English teacher says that English clubs are essential for learning English well.

English clubs

English clubs are said to be essential for learning English well.

كتاب جديد /مستوى رابع /صيفية 2018

Linguists have proved that learning some languages is helpful for the learners.

Learning some languages

Learning some languages has been proved to be helpful for the learners.