## UNIT 6 The Passive



Stonehenge was built in prehistoric times.

It was probably constructed as a place of worship.

Many of its stones have been stolen over the years.

It is visited by a lot of tourists every year.

We form the passive with the verb to be and the past participle of the main verb.

to be + past participle (pp)

**♦** The passive forms are:

present simple: am/is/are + pp

My car is serviced twice a year.

present continuous: am/is/are being + pp

My car is being serviced now.

past simple: was/were + pp

My car was serviced last month.

past continuous: was/were being + pp

My car was being serviced when I went to the garage.

present perfect simple: have/has been + pp

My car has already been serviced.

past perfect simple: had been + pp

My car had been serviced by two o'clock.

future simple: will be + pp

My car will be serviced tomorrow.

future perfect simple: will have been + pp My car will have been serviced by Monday.

present infinitive: (to) be + pp

My car needs to be serviced soon.

perfect infinitive: (to) have been + pp
My car should have been serviced last month.

-ing form: being + pp

I insist on my car being serviced today.

modals: modal + be + pp

My car must be serviced before the trip.

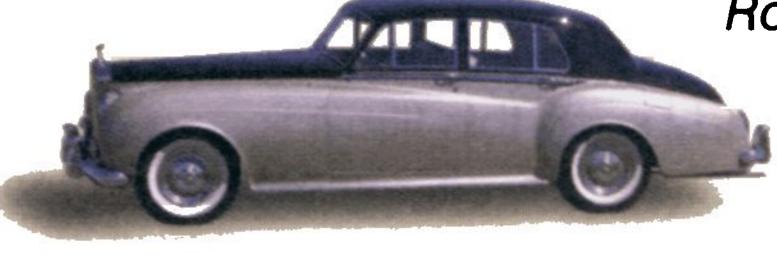
- ♦ The present perfect continuous, the future continuous, the past perfect continuous and the future perfect continuous are not normally used in the passive.
- ♦ We can use the verb to get instead of the verb to be in everyday speech when we talk about things that happen by accident or unexpectedly.
  - e.g. Mary got run over by a car while she was crossing the street. (=Mary was run over...)



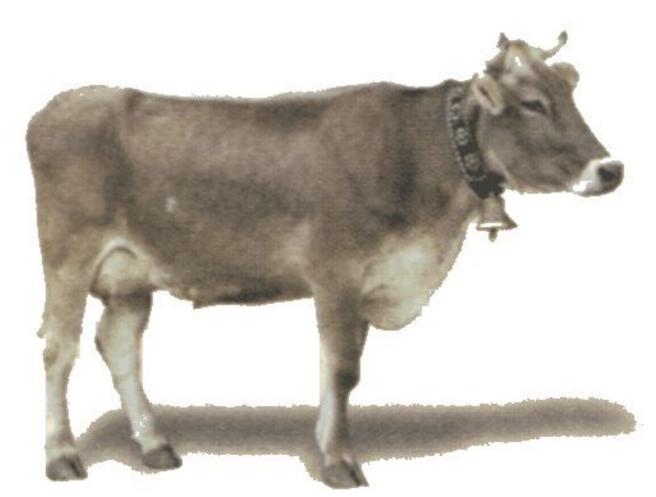
The passive is used:

a) when the person who carries out the action is unknown, unimportant or obvious from the context.

Mrs Archer's ruby ring was stolen from her house last night. (We do not know who stole the ring.)



Rolls Royce cars are made in England.
(It is not important to know who makes the cars.)



The cows are milked once a day. (It is obvious that the farmer milks the cows.)

b) when the action itself is more important than the person who carries it out, as in news headlines, newspaper articles, formal notices, instructions,

advertisements, etc.

Two teenagers were seriously injured in a car accident last night.

c) when we want to make statements more polite.
e.g. My new blouse is ruined. (more polite than saying, 'You've ruined my new blouse.')

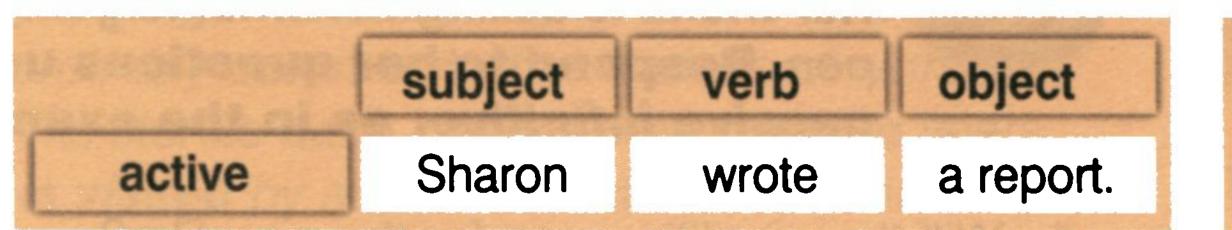
Note: The passive is used more often in written English than in spoken English.

## Changing from active into passive

To change a sentence from the active into the passive:

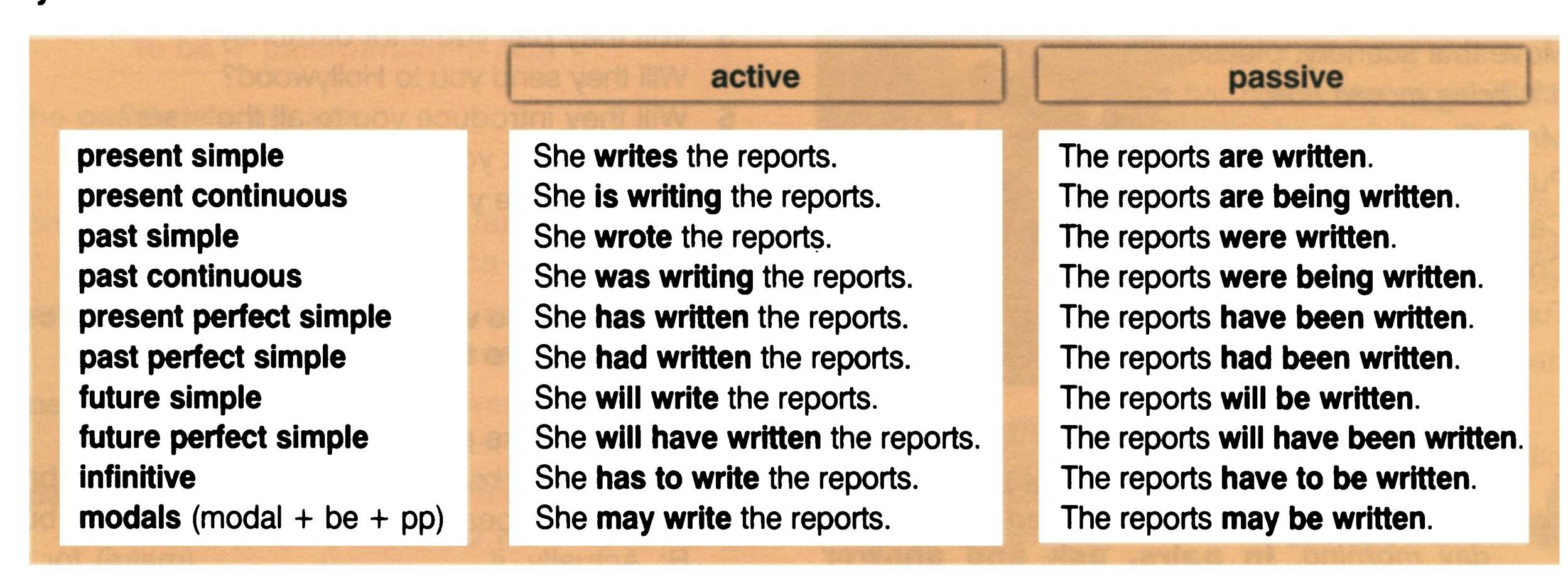
- a) The object of the active sentence becomes the subject in the passive sentence.
- b) The active verb remains in the same tense, but changes into a passive form.
- c) The subject of the active sentence becomes the agent, and is either introduced with the preposition by or omitted.
- Only transitive verbs (verbs followed by an object) can be changed into the passive.
  - e.g. active: Peter feeds the cows. (transitive verb) passive: The cows are fed by Peter.

but: They leave for work early every day. (The verb leave in this sentence is intransitive; that is, it is not followed by an object. The sentence cannot be changed into the passive.)





## Study the table:



- We use by + agent to say who or what carries out the action. We use with + instrument/material/ ingredient to say what the agent used.
  - e.g. A kite was made by John. It was made with paper, paint and string.
- The agent is often omitted in the passive sentence when the subject of the active sentence is one of the following words: people, one, someone/somebody, they, he, etc.
  - e.g. active: People eat a lot of junk food nowadays.

passive: A lot of junk food is eaten nowadays.

- Object pronouns (me, you, him, etc.) become subject pronouns (I, you, he, etc.) in the passive.
   e.g. active: They rescued me.
   passive: I was rescued.
- ♦ With verbs which take two objects such as bring, tell, send, show, teach, promise, buy, throw, write, award, hand, sell, owe, grant, allow, feed, pass, post, read, take, offer, give, pay and lend, we can make two different passive sentences. However, it is more usual for passive sentences to begin with the person.

active: Jessica showed Rod some photos.

passive: a) Rod was shown some photos by Jessica. (more usual)

b) Some photos were shown to Rod by Jessica.