



# Passive forms (1)

Every month in this section, ROBERT PARR writes notes on a short text to present and explain a key point of grammar.

easy plus

Passive forms of a verb are usually constructed by using a tense of the auxiliary verb **be** followed by the **past participle** of the verb.

In informal, spoken English, it is common to use **get** instead of **be** or **have** to form passives.

## Charlie is showing Paul round his house.

Paul: Your roof looks brand new.

Charlie: Yeah, it does. That's because it is new. Part of the roof **was blown off** in the storm last year.

Paul: Oh, yes. I remember you telling me about that.

Charlie: The whole roof **was redone**. That was in the spring.

Paul: Are you pleased with the work?

Charlie: Yes, very. Of course, it was quite pricey (*teuer*).

Paul: Right. It would be.

Charlie: And then we **got** the outside of the house **painted**.

Paul: And the windows? They look new.

Charlie: Yes, we **had** those **done** as well. (1)

Paul: It's almost a new house. What's the next project?

Charlie: Well, at the moment we're doing things indoors. The upstairs **is being recarpeted**.

Paul: That's another big job.

Charlie: Well, yes, but that's mainly because the rooms have **to be cleared out**. (2)

Passives are often used to talk about an action, when we are not interested in saying who did it. For Charlie, the people who did the work on the house are not as important as the work itself.

All tenses have both active and passive forms, so the passive form of the present continuous tense is used here to describe something happening at the moment of speaking.

## Beyond the basics

Passive structures with **have** are very common in spoken English (1). They look different from **be-** passives and **get-** passives (see above), but their meaning is the same because they describe what happens to someone and not what someone does:

- You should really **have** your eyes **tested**.
- I need to **have** my watch **repaired**.

## Remember!

Prepositional verbs (2) also have passive forms. Notice that the preposition comes at the end of the sentence:

- The food **has been paid for**.
- Who likes **to be shouted at**? I don't.

## Exercise

Charlie is talking to Paul. Which sentences (1 or 2) sound more natural: the active or the passive form?

- |                                                    |                                               |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| a) 1. Some guys recarpeted the upstairs last week. | 2. The upstairs was recarpeted last week.     |
| b) 1. The outdoor jobs were done in the summer.    | 2. People did the outdoor jobs in the summer. |
| c) 1. I still have to pay the men.                 | 2. The men still have to be paid.             |
| d) 1. Has your house been sold yet?                | 2. Have you sold your house yet?              |

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