

Advanced passive

English B2

What this topic teaches

You know the B1 passive: *The homework was eaten by the cat*. B2 adds the passive's grown-up moves: the *get*-passive, the *it is said that...* structure, and the double-object passive.

- *He **got fired***. – the *get*-passive, for events with a flavour of change or misfortune.
- *It **is said that** money can't buy happiness*. – the impersonal passive, for reporting what people claim.
- *I **was given** a present*. – when the verb has two objects, the *person* usually becomes the subject.
- Memory hook: B1 built the passive machine; B2 teaches it to dance.

The get-passive

get + participle – informal, alive, and slightly dramatic.

- *He got fired. She got promoted. My phone got stolen*. (Again? That phone needs a bodyguard.)
- *get* suggests the subject was affected: something *happened to* them, often suddenly.
- △ *get*-passives are informal. In an exam essay, *was fired* is the safer suit; in conversation, *got fired* is how people actually talk.

The impersonal passive: it is said that...

English reports claims and beliefs without naming who holds them.

Pattern	Example
It + be + participle + that...	It is believed that the test was hard.
subject + be + participle + to-infinitive	The test is believed to have been hard.

- The classic verbs: *say, believe, think, know, report, expect, suppose*.
- *It is said that he is a genius*. = *He is said to **be** a genius*. Two doors, same rumour.
- △ The *to*-form needs its verb tense matched: *He is believed to **have left** early* (he left first, people believe it now).

Two objects, two passives

Verbs like *give, send, show, teach, tell* carry two objects – and both can become the passive subject.

- Active: *They gave **me a medal***.
- Person-passive (the common one): ***I** was given a medal*.
- Thing-passive (rarer, formal): ***A medal** was given to me*.
- △ The person-passive is the natural choice in speech. *I was told the news* ✓, *The news was told to me* – legal, but stiff.

Watch out: traps for Chinese speakers

- △ ***get*-passive ≠ “become”**. *He got fired* is not *he became fired*; *get* + participle is a real passive with a real (hidden) actor.
- △ **The impersonal passive is not word-for-word**. “*It is said by people that...*” is heavy; the power of the structure is that nobody gets named. *It is said that...* – full stop.
- △ **Watch the infinitive's tense**. *He is believed to leave* (they believe it about now/the future) vs *He is believed to have left* (about a finished past). The infinitive wears a costume too.
- △ **Don't forget *be* anywhere in the chain**. “*It said that*” ×, “*He believed to have left*” ×. Every passive needs its *be* – the rule from B1 has not taken a day off.

Say it aloud

Report today's classroom rumours responsibly.

- It is said that the maths test was easy. It is believed that nobody checked.
- She is reported to have finished her homework. Witnesses are sceptical.
- I was given a medal for attendance. I got promoted to “person who collects the medals”.
- The cat is known to have eaten the homework. The cat has not commented.

Check yourself

Answer first, then read the explanation.

1. *He _____ (fire) last week.* (informal, sudden) – **got fired**. The *get*-passive carries the misfortune.
2. *It _____ (believe) that the test was hard.* – **is believed**. The impersonal passive names nobody.
3. *He is said _____ (leave) early. (he left first; people say it now)* – **to have left**. The infinitive matches the earlier event.
4. *They gave me a medal.* → passive – **I was given a medal**. The person steps into the spotlight.
5. *“It said that he is a genius.”* – × → **It is said that...** Every passive needs its *be*.