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Grammar Reference

Grammar Reference: The Passive Voice

In spoken English, many conversations are about the people in the conversations and what they have done or are doing. The focus in these conversations is on the “**doer**” of the actions. This is called the active voice. The passive voice is used less frequently in spoken English.

The passive voice is used when the “**doer**” of the action is unknown, unimportant, or obvious. The focus of passive voice is on the “**receiver**” of the action, NOT the “**doer**”. The “**receiver**” of the action becomes the subject of the sentence. However, when the agent is important, it should be introduced after the preposition by.

Form = Subject + form of be + past participle (+ by + agent)

Examples: Simple present: Nelson Mandela **is remembered** for his inspiring words and actions.
Present continuous: Most of his teachings **are still being applied** today.
Present perfect: Lives **have been forever changed** by her choice that day.
Future: Rosa Parks **is going to forever be remembered** as the woman who sparked a civil fire.
Modals: He **will be honored** at the hall of fame.
Past modals: No one **should have been surprised**.

In short answers, you can use the passive voice with a modal.

Example: I don't know but he **should have been**.

The verb **get** can also serve as an auxiliary to the passive voice. It is much more informal and used in spoken English. **Get** communicates change.

Example: They *got married* in 2006.

Grammar Reference: Subject-verb Agreement with Quantifiers

Having a subject and verb agree in tense and count can sometimes be difficult, especially when we add words like quantifiers.

All (of), a lot of, lots of, plenty of, some (of), most (of), and *fractions (half, one third, etc.)* take a *singular* verb if the noun they modify is *singular or non-count* and they take a *plural* verb if the noun they modify is *plural*.

Examples: *A lot of* English *grammar is* complicated.
Most people don't need to learn Chinese for work, but I do.
More than half of emails contain grammar mistakes.
Half of my family likes to eat spicy food.

A (*large/small/great*) number always modifies a *plural* noun and takes a *plural* verb.

Example: A (*large/small/great*) number of *students* in my class *were* absent last Monday.

Each of, every one of, none of, and collective nouns (a majority of, a minority of, etc.) take a *singular* verb. However, in **informal** spoken English, they often take a *plural* verb after a *plural* noun.

Examples: *None of us has* the right to correct other people's grammar.
Each of you uses your phones way too much.
The majority of teenagers use slang frequently.
Each of the students in the class *has* a copy of the textbook.

Everyone, someone, anyone, no one, each + noun, and every + noun are followed by a ***singular*** verb.

Examples: ***No one expects*** to wait for so long.
Every detail ***matters***.

Some examples of collective nouns: team, audience, class, couple, crowd, family, group, and team. Usually, when a collective noun refers to a ***single*** unit, a ***singular*** pronoun is used to refer to it.

Example: ***My football team has*** a lot of great players on it.

When a collective noun refers to a ***group*** of individuals, a ***plural*** noun is used.

Example: ***My football team is*** great. They are all my close friends.