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## Grammar Reference

### a. The passive voice

We often prefer to use *the passive voice* when:

1. We do not know who the agent is:

Examples: 'I don't know who did it, but my puppies **have been let out.**'

'She had the feeling that she **was being followed.**'

Instead of: 'I don't know who did it, but someone has let out my puppies.'

'She had the feeling that somebody was following her.'

2. When it is obvious to the listener or reader who the agent is:

Examples: 'I **had been told** to remove all the ash trays.'

'She discovered that she **was being paid** less than her colleagues.'

Instead of: 'My boss had told me to remove all the ash trays.'

'She discovered that the firm was paying her less than her colleagues.'

3. When it is not important to know who the agent is:

Example: 'Do you want a lift?' 'No thanks, I'm **being collected.**'

Instead of: 'Do you want a lift?' 'No thanks, my sister is collecting me.'

4. When the agent has already been mentioned:

Example: 'In the next session of parliament, new laws will **be introduced** aimed at increasing taxes.'

Instead of: 'In the next session of parliament, the government will introduce new laws aimed at increasing taxes.'

5. When people in general are the agents:

Example: 'All the Chinese musical records **can be borrowed** from the central library.'

Instead of: 'You can borrow all the Chinese musical records from the central library.'

Passive forms are made up of an appropriate form of the verb '*to be*' followed by the past participle (pp) form of the verb:

Verb form	Construction	Example
Present simple	am/is/are + pp	How <b>is</b> this word <b>pronounced?</b>
Present continuous	am/are/is being + pp	The house <b>is being redecorated.</b>

Present perfect simple	has/have been + pp	He's just <b>been sacked!</b>
Past continuous	was/were being + pp	He <b>was being treated</b> for depression when he won the lottery.
Past perfect simple	had been + pp	The vegetables <b>had been cooked</b> for far too long, but we had to eat them.
Future simple	will be + pp	The house contents <b>will be auctioned</b> a week on Saturday.
Future perfect simple	will have been + pp	There's no point in hurrying. It <b>will all have been eaten</b> by now.
Infinitive	(to) be + pp	Exams have to <b>be taken</b> almost every year you are at school. Do you know who is going to <b>be invited?</b>

### Attention!

It is possible to form the passive with other verb forms, such as the perfect continuous ones, but usually it is better to avoid these forms because of their complicated and inelegant structure e.g.

Example: 'The factory **has been being** built for 10 years!

### b. Relative clauses

We can use relative clauses to join two English sentences or to give more information about something.

Examples: I bought a new car. It is very fast.  
→ **I bought a new car that is very fast.**

She lives in New York. She likes living in New York.  
→ **She lives in New York, which she likes.**

### Defining relative clauses:

#### 1. The relative pronoun is the subject

First, let's consider when the relative pronoun is the subject of a defining relative clause. We can use '*who*', '*which*' or '*that*'.

We use '*who*' for *people* and '*which*' for *things*. We can use '*that*' for *people* or *things*. The relative clause can come after the subject or the object of the sentence. We can't drop the relative pronoun.

Examples:

I'm looking for a secretary *who / that can use a computer well.*

She has a son *who / that is a doctor.*

We bought a house *which / that is 200 years old.*

I sent a letter *which / that arrived three weeks later.*

## 2. The relative pronoun is the object

Next, let's talk about when the relative pronoun is the object of the clause. In this case we can drop the relative pronoun if we want to. Again, the clause can come after the subject or the object of the sentence.

Examples:

She loves the chocolate *(which / that) I bought from the shopping mall.*

We went to the village *(which / that) Lucy recommended.*

John met a woman *(whom / that) I had been to school with.*

The police arrested a man *(whom / that) Jill worked with.*

**Note:** "Whom" is less common in American spoken English.

### Non-defining relative clauses:

We don't use '*that*' in non-defining relative clauses, so we need to use '*which*' if the pronoun refers to a *thing*, and '*who*' if it refers to a *person*. We can't drop the relative pronoun in this kind of clause, even if the relative pronoun is the subject of the clause.

Examples: (Clause comes after the subject)

My boss, *who is very nice*, lives in Manchester.

My sister, *who I live with*, knows a lot about cars.

My bicycle, *which I've had for more than ten years*, is falling apart.

My mother's house, *which I grew up in*, is very small.

Examples: (Clause comes after the object)

Yesterday I called our friend Julie, *who lives in New York.*

The photographer called to the Queen, *who looked annoyed.*

Last week I bought a new computer, *which I don't like now.*

I really love the new Chinese restaurant, *which we went to last night.*

### c. Simple past and past continuous

The **simple past** and the **past continuous** are two tenses commonly used to make general statements about the past. Although they are both past tenses their uses are quite different.

*The simple past tense* is only used to say that something happened at some time in the past.

Examples: I *went* to a Chinese restaurant yesterday.  
She *called* me in the morning.  
He *went* to the market.  
I *flew* to Sydney last month.  
I *visited* my sister during my trip to Australia.

As you can see all of these sentences are about finished events in the past. The simple past tense is commonly used with past time adverbs like *yesterday, last week, last year* etc.

*The past continuous tense* is mainly used to talk about past events that were in progress at a particular point of time in the past.

Examples: I *was reading* at 6 p.m. yesterday evening.  
She *was getting* ready for school at 9:30 a.m. yesterday morning.

This tense form is also used to talk about *events happening at the same time that something important happened in the past*. Note that we use the simple past to denote the *action that happened in the middle of the longer action denoted by the past continuous tense*.

Examples: She *was having* a bath when the telephone *rang*.  
(Here we use the past continuous tense to refer to the longer background action and the simple past tense to refer to the shorter action that happened in the middle.)

They *were playing* cards when someone *knocked* at the door.  
She *was having* lunch when visitors *arrived*.

When we are talking about *two longer actions that were in progress at the same time*, we use the past continuous tense in both clauses.

Example: Alice *was cooking* dinner when Jack *was playing* cards.