UNIT 43

Passive (3)

A **I was born...**

We say: **I was** born... (*not* 'I am born'):

- **I was born** in Chicago.
- Where **were** you **born**? (*not* 'where are you born') } *past simple*

but
- How many babies **are born** every day? *present simple*

B Some verbs can have two objects. For example, **give:**

- We gave **the police** (*object 1*) **the information** (*object 2*). (= We gave the information to the police.)

So it is possible to make two passive sentences:

- **The police** were given the information. *or* **The information** was given to the police.

Other verbs which can have two objects are: **ask offer pay show teach tell**

When we use these verbs in the passive, most often we begin with the *person*:

- **I was offered** the job but I refused it. (= they offered me the job)
- **You will be given** plenty of time to decide. (= we will give you plenty of time)
- **Have you been shown** the new machine? (= has anybody shown you...?)
- **The men were paid** £200 to do the work. (= somebody paid the men £200)

C **I don't like being...**

The passive of **doing/seeing** etc. is **being done / being seen** etc. Compare:

active: I don't like **people telling me** what to do.

passive: I don't like **being told** what to do.

- I remember **being given** a toy drum on my fifth birthday. (= I remember somebody giving me a toy drum...)
- Mr Miller hates **being kept** waiting. (= he hates people keeping him waiting)
- We managed to climb over the wall without **being seen.** (= ...without anybody seeing us)

D **Get**

Sometimes you can use **get** instead of **be** in the passive:

- There was a fight at the party but nobody **got hurt.** (= nobody **was** hurt)
- I don't often **get invited** to parties. (= **I'm** not often invited)
- I'm surprised Ann **didn't get offered** the job. (...Ann **wasn't offered** the job)

You can use **get** to say that something happens to somebody or something, especially if this is unplanned or unexpected:

- Our dog **got run** over by a car.

You can use **get** only when things happen or change. For example, you cannot use **get** in these sentences:

- Jill **is liked** by everybody. (*not* 'gets liked' – this is not a 'happening')
- He was a mystery man. Nothing **was known** about him. (*not* 'got known')

We use **get** mainly in informal spoken English. You can use **be** in all situations.

We also use **get** in the following expressions (which are not passive in meaning):

get married **get divorced**
get dressed (= put on your clothes) **get changed** (= change your clothes)

Passive (1) and (2) → UNITS 41–42

EXERCISES

43.1 *When were they born? Choose five of these people and write a sentence for each. (Two of them were born in the same year.)*

Beethoven	Galileo	Elvis Presley	1452	1869	1929
Agatha Christie	Mahatma Gandhi	Leonardo da Vinci	1564	1891	1935
~~Walt Disney~~	Martin Luther King	William Shakespeare	1770	~~1901~~	

1 Walt Disney was born in 1901.
2 .....
3 .....
4 .....
5 .....
6 .....
7 And you? I .....

43.2 *Write these sentences in another way, beginning in the way shown.*

1 They didn't give me the money. I wasn't given the money.
2 They asked me some difficult questions at the interview.
I .....
3 Janet's colleagues gave her a present when she retired.
Janet .....
4 Nobody told me that George was ill.
I wasn't .....
5 How much will they pay you?
How much will you .....
6 I think they should have offered Tom the job.
I think Tom .....
7 Has anybody shown you what to do?
Have you .....

43.3 *Complete the sentences using* **being** + *one of these verbs:*

ask attack give invite ~~keep~~ pay

1 Mr Miller doesn't like being kept waiting.
2 They went to the party without .....
3 Most people like ..... presents.
4 It's a dangerous city. People won't go out after dark because they are afraid of .....
5 I don't like ..... stupid questions.
6 Few people are prepared to work without .....

43.4 *Complete the sentences using* **get/got** + *one of these verbs (in the correct form):*

ask break damage ~~hurt~~ pay steal sting stop use

1 There was a fight at the party but nobody got hurt.
2 Ted ..... by a bee while he was sitting in the garden.
3 How did that window .....?
4 These tennis courts don't ..... very often. Not many people want to play.
5 I used to have a bicycle but it .....
6 Last night I ..... by the police as I was driving home.
7 How much did you ..... last month?
8 Please pack these things very carefully. I don't want them to .....
9 People often want to know what my job is. I often ..... that question.