

Unit 42: PASSIVE SENTENCES

All sentences are either active or passive.

1 Active and passive

These two sentences have different meanings:

ACTIVE: John helped the other students.

PASSIVE: John was helped by the other students.

In the active sentence, John did something. In the passive sentence, something happened to John (he did not do anything).

2 Agent

Look at these two passive sentences:

The other students were helped **by John**. John is the agent because he did something.

John was helped **by the other students**. John is not the agent; the agent is the other students.

The agent is the doer of the action.

We use **by** before the agent in a passive sentence. But many passive sentences do not tell us about the agent because it is not of interest or not important (Unit 44).

3 Making active into passive

When you change an active sentence into passive, you change the verb formation and you change the word order.

These two sentences have the same basic meaning:

	AGENT	VERB	VERB	AGENT
ACTIVE	Maria	helped		the other students.
PASSIVE			The other students were helped	by Maria.

Unit 43 shows you passive verb formations, but don't forget that subject and verb must agree in number and person (Unit 4).

Unit 44 shows you when to use the passive.