

The passive voice

CHAPITRE 7

In English There are two voices: active and passive. In the active voice, the subject of a sentence is the *agent*, that is, the person or thing doing something. In the **passive voice**, the subject *receives* the action. The passive is used to say that something *is being done* to someone or something.

ACTIVE: The hurricane **destroyed** our home.

PASSIVE: Our home **was destroyed** by the hurricane.

To express a passive action, use a form of **to be** and the **past participle** of the main verb. The agent can be expressed through a **by + noun clause** (*by the hurricane*). Often in a passive sentence, the agent is not even mentioned.

Our house **was built** last year.

A Circle the form of the verb *to be* and underline the past participle in the following passive sentences. The indicate who or what the agent is. If the sentence lacks one, write **no agent**.

AGENT

- | | |
|--|----------------------------|
| 1. This dam <u>was</u> <u>built</u> by my grandfather. | _____ my grandfather _____ |
| 2. The same book was read by all students. | _____ |
| 3. Your voice could be heard across the room. | _____ |
| 4. The thief was arrested by the police. | _____ |
| 5. The injured were taken to the hospital. | _____ |
| 6. Ten roads will be built next year. | _____ |
| 7. The tree was struck by lightning. | _____ |
| 8. The information is found in my blog. | _____ |

In French There are also **active** and **passive** voices. To form a sentence in the passive voice, use a form of **être** and the **past participle** of the main verb.

Cette maison **a été construite** en 1965.

The past participle (**construite**) must agree in number and gender with the recipient of the action (**cette maison**).

To tell who or what is doing the action, use **par + the agent**.

La maison **a été détruite** par un cyclone.

Le livre **a été lu** par les étudiants.

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B Circle the form of the verb **être** and underline the past participle in the following passive sentences. On the right, write who or what the agent is. If the sentence lacks one, write **no agent**.

- | | AGENT |
|---|------------------------------|
| 1. Ce pont <u>a été</u> <u>construit</u> par mon oncle. | _____ <u>mon oncle</u> _____ |
| 2. Tous les appartements sont loués. | _____ |
| 3. Le mur a été détruit par un raz-de-marée. | _____ |
| 4. Je suis invitée par mon ami. | _____ |
| 5. Le lycée a été évacué ce matin. | _____ |
| 6. Le président est interviewé par ton frère? | _____ |
| 7. Deux alligators ont été attrapés en Floride. | _____ |
| 8. Je crains que tu sois mordu par ce chien. | _____ |

C Rewrite these active sentences as passive sentences.

- Beaucoup de gens lisent les journaux.
Les journaux sont lus par beaucoup de gens. _____
- Les voisins décorent les maisons du quartier.

- Les enfants vont nettoyer les rues après la fête.

- Trois hommes ont monté le piano.

- Geneviève va acheter le gâteau.

D The passive voice is used less frequently in French than in English, because the same idea can be expressed two different ways: **Une tornade est prévue. On prévoit une tornade.** For the following sentences, express the same idea a different way.

- Le français est parlé à Lausanne.

- On passe des films français dans ce cinéma.
