

Passives: some special points

Some verbs can be followed by two objects. The objects usually refer to a person (indirect object) and a thing (direct object). The indirect object usually comes before the direct object. We can also put the indirect object after the direct object. In this case, we will use a preposition like *to* or *for*.

Examples of verbs that can be followed by two objects are: *give, send, show* and *lend*.

He sent her some flowers. (Here the indirect object comes before the direct object.)

He sent some flowers to her. (Here the direct object comes before the indirect object.)

Both structures can be made passive.

She was sent some flowers. (Here the indirect object becomes the subject of the passive verb.)

Some flowers were sent to her. (Here the direct object becomes the subject of the passive verb.)

Verbs that do not have passive forms

Not all verbs can have passive forms. Passive forms are impossible with intransitive verbs which cannot have objects. When the active verb doesn't have an object, passive structures are impossible because there is nothing to become the subject of the passive sentence.

Some transitive verbs, too, are not normally used in the passive. Examples are: *have, fit, lack, resemble, suit* etc.

Cases where passive structures are not possible

We have already learned that a sentence without an object cannot be made passive because there is nothing to become the subject of the passive structure. Some sentences have infinitives or clauses as their objects. They cannot normally be made passive.

He hoped to find a good job. (BUT NOT To find a good job was hoped by him.)

Some sentences have verbs with object + infinitive. They can usually be made passive.

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She asked me to send a car to her house. (Active)

I was asked to send a car to her house. (Passive)

We believe him to be loyal. (Active)

He is believed to be loyal. (Passive)