Passive of Reporting Verbs / Impersonal Passive

Verbs that refer to saying or thinking (*think, believe, say, report, know, consider, presume, hope...*) are often followed by a to-infinitive form in the passive.

Example: The police *think* he is in Argentina.
He *is thought to be* in Argentina.

There are **FOUR INFINITIVE FORMS**, which we will use depending on the tense we have in the active sentence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Simple</th>
<th>to write</th>
<th>escribir</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continuous</td>
<td>to be writing</td>
<td>estar escribiendo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfect</td>
<td>to have written</td>
<td>haber escrito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perf. Continuous</td>
<td>to have been writing</td>
<td>haber estado escribiendo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**In order to make this type of passive sentence, we**

1. Take the subject of the second sentence: **He**
2. Passive verb of the Reporting verb in the same tense as in the active: **is thought**
3. The verb of the second sentence in the Infinitive form: **to be**

**Which form of the infinitive do we use?**

- If it carries an idea of present or future ⇒ Simple: **to write**
- If it carries an idea of past, whatever the tense (Past Simple, Past Perfect, Present Perfect) ⇒ Perfect: **to have written**.
- If either of them are in a continuous form, you use the adequate Infinitive continuous form ⇒ **to be writing or to have been writing**

**Some more examples:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Active</th>
<th>Passive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They say she <em>works</em> hard.</td>
<td>She <em>is said to work</em> hard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They say she <em>played</em> well.</td>
<td>She <em>is said to have played</em> well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They <em>said</em> she <em>played</em> well.</td>
<td>She <em>was said to have played</em> well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They believe he <em>is having</em> an affair.</td>
<td>He <em>is believed to be having</em> an affair.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They believe he <em>has been having</em> an affair.</td>
<td>He <em>is believed to have been having</em> an affair.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She <em>believes</em> the repairs <em>have been finished</em>.</td>
<td>The repairs <em>are believed to have been finished</em>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GET / HAVE SOMETHING DONE (Passive Voice)

This construction is passive in meaning. It may describe situations where we want someone else to do something for us.

**Examples**

- *I must get / have my hair cut.*
- *When are you going to get that window mended?*
- *We're having the house painted.*

If the verb refers to something negative or unwanted, it has the same meaning as a passive sentence:

- *Jim had his car stolen last night.* (= Jim’s car was stolen)
- *They had their roof blown off in the storm.* (= Their roof was blown off in the storm)

The construction can refer to the completion of an activity, especially if a time expression is used:

- *We'll get the work done as soon as possible.*
- *I'll get those letters typed before lunchtime.*

In all these sentences, we are more interested in the result of the activity than in the person or object that performs the activity.

‘X’ NEEDS DOING

In the same way, this construction has a passive meaning. The important thing in our minds is the person or thing that will experience the action, e.g.

- *The ceiling needs painting* (= the ceiling needs to be painted)
- *My hair needs cutting* (= my hair needs to be cut)

**Some verbs have special Passive forms:**

- **MAKE AND HELP**
  
  They are followed by a bare infinitive in the active, but take a *to-infinitive* in the passive.
  
  Active:  
  *Her two sisters made him clean the house*  
  
  Passive:  
  *He was made to clean the house by her two sisters.*

- **LET**
  
  In the passive, *let* is replaced by *allowed* and is followed by a to-infinitive.
  
  Active:  
  *The teacher let us leave early*  
  
  Passive:  
  *We were allowed to leave early (by the teacher)*

- **SEE AND HEAR**
  
  Some *verbs of the senses* can be followed by either a *to-infinitive* or a *gerund* form in the passive.
  
  Active:  
  *They heard the baby cry / crying.*  
  
  Passive:  
  *The baby was heard to cry / crying.*
EXERCISES

**Impersonal Passive**

1. People believe that English is the most widely spoken language.
   - It is believed that English is the most widely spoken language.
   - English is believed to be the most widely spoken language.

2. Police have reported that it was Peter who caused the accident.
   - It has been reported that it was Peter who caused the accident.
   - Peter has been reported to have caused the accident.

3. A journalist reports that they are leaving Las Vegas tomorrow night.
   - It is reported that they are leaving Las Vegas tomorrow night.
   - They

4. The lecturer thought that Columbus never realized that he had discovered America.
   - It was thought that Columbus never realized that he had discovered America.
   - Columbus

5. Their parents thought that the teenagers were dancing at the disco.
   - It was thought that the teenagers were dancing at the disco.
   - The teenagers

6. Everybody thinks that she sings beautifully.
   - It is thought that she sings beautifully.

7. The children reported that their friends were swimming when they disappeared.
   - It was reported that their friends were swimming when they disappeared.

8. People believed that they had killed the animals during the night.
   - It was believed that they had killed the animals during the night.

9. My friends think that my parents are the best parents in the world.
   - It is thought that my parents are the best parents in the world.

10. They believed that the horse was a present.
    - It was believed that the horse was a present.

11. People are thinking that drugs are very dangerous.
    - It is being thought that drugs are very dangerous.

12. They knew that Mr. Brown was stealing iron from the factory.
    - It was known that Mr. Brown was stealing from the company.

13. Ancient people thought that the stars would fall on them.
    - It was thought that the stars would fall on them.

14. People consider that the team will be classified for the final.
    - It is considered that the team will be classified for the final.

15. Everybody says that he settled the business.
    - It is said that he settled the business.

16. The reporters believed that the meeting would finish soon.
    - It was believed that the meeting would finish soon.
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