

Extension exercises

Chapter 22: Passive constructions | Comments

Exploring English

How you answer this question will depend on which language you choose. In many languages a number of different ways will be used to translate these different sentences. In some languages there is no distinction between active and passive forms of the verb, while in others, for example, a special particle or word may be used to indicate 'acted upon-ness', a reflexive form of the verb may be used or there may be changes to the order of words.

The passive constructions in these sentences are:

- (i) *Is ... spoken?*
- (ii) *... have ... cut.*
- (iii) *... get caught.*
- (iv) *... were ... born?*

To be born is now a fossilised expression. The original meaning of *bear* (*bear a child*) is largely obsolete in other contexts.

- (v) *was ... made?*
- (vi) *is believed, worn*

We understand *hair* [*which was*] *worn*.

Course materials

How you answer this question will naturally depend on the materials you choose.

Very often courses introduce passive constructions with present, past simple and, perhaps, present perfect tenses at a low intermediate level. They then introduce them with other tenses at higher intermediate levels and also teach the causative at this level. They sometimes don't consider the use of *get* at all – or only in passing or as an 'add on' at an advanced level. They often pay a lot of attention to the form of passive constructions and relatively little to their use. Practice may, in some cases, consist primarily of transforming active sentences into passive ones.

Exploring how learners use English

The results of this task will naturally depend on the experience and preferences of the learners, and perhaps also on what their first language is. The task is intended to help you to develop a greater awareness of your students' needs in relation to passive constructions.