

Passive: Continuous Tenses

Grammar Lesson, Examples & 30 Practice Questions

Passive: Continuous Tenses

In English, we usually say **who** does something. For example: "*The chef is cooking the meal.*" But sometimes, we want to talk about **what is happening** to something, not who is doing it. We use the **passive continuous** to do this.

Look at these two sentences:

- **Active:** The workers are building a new school. (*We focus on the workers.*)
- **Passive:** A new school is being built. (*We focus on the school.*)

The **passive continuous** tells us that something **is happening to** a person or thing right now (or was happening in the past). The person or thing receives the action — it does not do the action.

In this lesson, we will look at two continuous passive tenses:

- **Present Continuous Passive** — something is being done *now*
- **Past Continuous Passive** — something was being done *at a time in the past*

Understanding "Active" and "Passive"

Before we look at the rules, let's understand what **active** and **passive** mean.

Imagine you are watching a kitchen:

- **Active:** *The chef is cooking the pasta.* — The chef **does** the action.
- **Passive:** *The pasta is being cooked.* — The pasta **receives** the action.

In the passive, the thing that receives the action (the pasta) becomes the most important part of the sentence. We put it at the beginning.

We often use the passive when:

- We **do not know** who does the action.
- It is **not important** who does the action.
- We want to focus on **what is happening** to something.

Present Continuous Passive

We use the **Present Continuous Passive** to say that something **is being done right now**, at this moment.

A Simple Story

Maria walks past a building site. She sees workers and machines. She says:

"A new hospital is being built in my town."

She does not know all the workers' names. She only cares about the hospital. So she uses the **passive**.

How to Form the Present Continuous Passive

Subject + am/is/are + being + past participle

Let's look at each part:

- **am / is / are** — this is the verb "to be" in the present tense
- **being** — this shows the action is happening *right now* (continuous)
- **past participle** — this is the third form of the verb (e.g. cook → cooked, build → built, write → written)

Note: The "past participle" is the form of the verb we use in passive sentences. For regular verbs, it ends in -ed. For irregular verbs, it has a special form (e.g. write → written, make → made, build → built).

Present Continuous Passive: Forms Table

Subject	am / is / are	being	Past Participle	Full Example
I	am	being	helped	I am being helped.
He / She / It	is	being	tested	She is being tested.
You / We / They	are	being	trained	They are being trained.
The car	is	being	repaired	The car is being repaired.
The letters	are	being	written	The letters are being written.

More Present Continuous Passive Examples

- *The report is being prepared.* (Someone is preparing it now.)
- *New roads are being built in the city.*
- *The windows are being cleaned at the moment.*
- *Dinner is being cooked right now.*
- *I am being interviewed for a job today.*

Negative Form: Present Continuous Passive

To make a **negative** sentence, add **not** after *am / is / are*:

Subject + am/is/are + not + being + past participle

- *The problem is **not being** fixed.*
- *The children are **not being** supervised.*
- *I am **not being** ignored.*

Question Form: Present Continuous Passive

To make a **question**, put *am / is / are* at the beginning:

Am/Is/Are + subject + being + past participle?

- **Is** the car *being repaired*?
- **Are** the students *being tested*?
- **Am** I *being recorded*?

Past Continuous Passive

We use the **Past Continuous Passive** to say that something **was being done** at a specific moment in the past. The action was *in progress* at that time.

A Simple Story

Tom arrived home at 6 o'clock yesterday. He saw paint and workers everywhere. He said:

"When I arrived home, my house was being painted."

The painting was happening at that moment in the past (when he arrived). So we use the **past continuous passive**.

How to Form the Past Continuous Passive

Subject + was/were + being + past participle

- **was / were** — this is the verb "to be" in the past tense
- **being** — this shows the action was in progress (continuous)
- **past participle** — the third form of the verb

Past Continuous Passive: Forms Table

Subject	was / were	being	Past Participle	Full Example
I	was	being	watched	I was being watched.
He / She / It	was	being	treated	He was being treated at the hospital.
You / We / They	were	being	followed	We were being followed.
The bridge	was	being	repaired	The bridge was being repaired.
The papers	were	being	checked	The papers were being checked.

More Past Continuous Passive Examples

- *The road was being repaired when the accident happened.*
- *New houses were being built in the village last year.*
- *The children were being looked after while their parents were at work.*
- *At midnight, the stolen car was being driven across the border.*
- *The machines were being tested when the power went off.*

Negative Form: Past Continuous Passive

To make a **negative** sentence, add **not** after *was / were*:

Subject + *was/were* + **not** + *being* + past participle

- *The question was **not being** answered.*
- *The students were **not being** supervised properly.*
- *I was **not being** listened to.*

Question Form: Past Continuous Passive

To make a **question**, put *was / were* at the beginning:

Was/Were + subject + *being* + past participle?

- ***Was** the food being prepared?*
- ***Were** the workers being paid?*
- ***Was** she being helped?*

Adding "by" to Show Who Does the Action

Sometimes we want to say **who** is doing (or was doing) the action. We use **by** to do this.

Subject + *am/is/are/was/were* + *being* + past participle + **by** + person/thing

- *The house is being painted **by** a professional team.*
- *The letter is being written **by** the manager.*
- *The road was being repaired **by** the council.*
- *The children were being taught **by** a new teacher.*

Remember: We only add "by + person/thing" when it gives important or useful information. If it is not important or obvious, we leave it out.

Active to Passive: How to Change a Sentence

Follow these three steps to change an active sentence to a passive sentence:

Step 1: Find the *object* of the active sentence. This becomes the *subject* of the passive sentence.

Step 2: Use *am/is/are/was/were* + *being* with the correct form.

Step 3: Add the *past participle* of the main verb.

Example 1 — Present Continuous

Active: *The mechanic is fixing the car.*

→ Object = the car (this becomes the subject)

→ Verb = fixing → past participle = fixed

Passive: *The car is being fixed (by the mechanic).*

Example 2 — Past Continuous

Active: *Workers were building a new road.*

→ Object = a new road (this becomes the subject)

→ Verb = building → past participle = built

Passive: *A new road was being built (by workers).*

Active to Passive Comparison Table

Tense	Active Sentence	Passive Sentence
Present Continuous	They are cleaning the office.	The office is being cleaned.
Present Continuous	She is making a cake.	A cake is being made.
Present Continuous	The doctor is examining him.	He is being examined.
Past Continuous	They were repairing the bridge.	The bridge was being repaired.
Past Continuous	She was teaching the students.	The students were being taught.
Past Continuous	They were following me.	I was being followed.

Important Differences: Present Continuous vs Past Continuous Passive

Feature	Present Continuous Passive	Past Continuous Passive
Time	Happening now / at this moment	Was happening at a moment in the past
Form	am/is/are + being + past participle	was/were + being + past participle
Time words	now, at the moment, currently, today	when, while, at that time, yesterday, at 6 o'clock
Example	The bridge is being repaired now.	The bridge was being repaired when I passed.

Common Mistakes

✗ The car is been repaired.

✓ **The car is being repaired.** (Use "being", not "been", after is/am/are.)

✗ The letters are being write by the manager.

✓ **The letters are being written by the manager.** (Use the past participle "written", not the base form "write".)

✗ The house was being paint when I arrived.

✓ **The house was being painted when I arrived.** (Regular verbs need -ed: paint → painted.)

✗ A new road were being built.

✓ **A new road was being built.** ("A new road" is singular, so use "was", not "were".)

- ✗ The students are being test right now.
- ✓ **The students are being tested right now.** (*Don't forget to add -ed for regular verbs.*)
- ✗ Were the bridge being repaired?
- ✓ **Was the bridge being repaired?** (*"The bridge" is singular, so use "was".*)
- ✗ The cake is being make by my mother.
- ✓ **The cake is being made by my mother.** (*The past participle of "make" is "made", not "make".*)

Useful Irregular Past Participles to Remember

Many common verbs have irregular past participles. Here are some you will often see in passive sentences:

Base Form	Past Participle	Passive Example
build	built	A school is being built.
make	made	The dress is being made.
write	written	The report is being written.
teach	taught	The class was being taught.
drive	driven	The car was being driven.
take	taken	The photos are being taken.
give	given	Prizes are being given.
repair	repaired	The phone is being repaired. (<i>regular</i>)

Passive Continuous Tenses: Quick Summary

Here is a quick review of the **passive continuous tenses**:

- We use the **passive** when we want to focus on *what happens* to something, not on who does the action.
- The **Present Continuous Passive** = **am/is/are + being + past participle** — for things happening *now*.
- The **Past Continuous Passive** = **was/were + being + past participle** — for things that were in progress at a moment *in the past*.
- Add **not** after *am/is/are/was/were* to make **negatives**.
- Put *am/is/are/was/were* at the start of the sentence to make **questions**.
- Use **by** when you want to say *who* does the action.
- Always use the **past participle** — be careful with irregular verbs!

Now practise **passive continuous tenses** in the exercises below.

Passive: Continuous Tenses – Practice Test

A2 | 30 Questions: Multiple Choice, Fill-in-the-Gap & Fill-in-the-Blank

Part 1: Multiple Choice (Questions 1–10)

1 The house ____ painted right now by the workers.

- A** is being
- B** are being
- C** was being
- D** is been

2 The windows ____ cleaned when I arrived.

- A** are being
- B** were being
- C** was being
- D** is being

3 The cake ____ made at the moment.

- A** is being
- B** are being
- C** was being
- D** were being

4 The letters ____ written when the boss called.

- A** are being
- B** is being
- C** were being
- D** was being

5 Look! The car ____ repaired by the mechanic.

- A** was being
- B** were being
- C** is being
- D** are being

6 The road ____ fixed when we drove past yesterday.

- A** is being
- B** are being
- C** were being
- D** was being

7 The children ____ taught English at this moment.

- A** is being
- B** was being
- C** were being
- D** are being

8 A new bridge ____ built in our town right now.

- A** are being
- B** were being
- C** was being
- D** is being

9 The dogs ____ fed by the farmer when it started raining.

- A** is being
- B** are being
- C** was being
- D** were being

10 Which sentence uses the present continuous passive correctly?

- A** The report is wrote now.
- B** The report is being written now.
- C** The report are being write now.
- D** The report was being written now.

Part 2: Fill in the Gap (Questions 11–20)

11 The house ____ painted right now.

- A** is being
- B** is been
- C** are being

12 The windows ____ cleaned at the moment.

- A** are being
- B** is being
- C** were being

13 The meal ____ cooked when I arrived.

- A** was being
- B** is being
- C** were being

14 The roads ____ repaired when the storm started.

- A** were being
- B** was being
- C** are being

15 The cake ____ decorated right now by my sister.

- A** is being
- B** was being
- C** are being

16 The letters ____ written when the phone rang.

- A** were being
- B** are being
- C** was being

17 The car ____ not ____ washed at this moment.

- A** is, being
- B** are, being
- C** was, being

18 The students ____ tested when the fire alarm went off.

- A** were being
- B** was being
- C** are being

19 ____ the new school being built at the moment?

- A** Is
- B** Are
- C** Was

20 The toys ____ fixed by dad when we came home.

- A** were being
- B** are being
- C** is being

Part 3: Fill in the Blank (Questions 21–30)

21 The road _____ repaired right now, so there is a lot of traffic.

22 The students _____ tested by their teacher at this moment.

23 The new bridge _____ built when the accident happened.

24 The children _____ taught English when I arrived at the school.

25 Look! The windows _____ cleaned by the workers.

26 I _____ helped by my teacher with my homework right now.

27 The party _____ organized by Maria when the power went off.

28 The emails _____ sent to all the customers at the moment.

29 The packages _____ delivered when it started to rain.

30 The new menu _____ prepared by the chef in the kitchen right now.

Answer Key & Explanations

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Part 1: Multiple Choice

1. **A** Correct Answer: is being ✓ Explanation: We use is being + past participle for the present continuous passive. The house is singular, so we use is, not are. The house is being painted right now.
2. **B** Correct Answer: were being ✓ Explanation: We use were being + past participle for the past continuous passive. The windows is plural, so we use were. The windows were being cleaned when I arrived.
3. **A** Correct Answer: is being ✓ Explanation: We use is being + past participle for the present continuous passive. The cake is singular, so we use is. The cake is being made at the moment.
4. **C** Correct Answer: were being ✓ Explanation: We use were being + past participle for the past continuous passive. The letters is plural, so we use were. The letters were being written when the boss called.
5. **C** Correct Answer: is being ✓ Explanation: The word Look! tells us this is happening now, so we use the present continuous passive: is being + past participle. The car is being repaired right now.
6. **D** Correct Answer: was being ✓ Explanation: We use was being + past participle for the past continuous passive. The road is singular, so we use was. The road was being fixed yesterday.
7. **D** Correct Answer: are being ✓ Explanation: We use are being + past participle for the present continuous passive. The children is plural, so we use are. The children are being taught English now.
8. **D** Correct Answer: is being ✓ Explanation: We use is being + past participle for the present continuous passive. A new bridge is singular, so we use is. A new bridge is being built right now.
9. **D** Correct Answer: were being ✓ Explanation: We use were being + past participle for the past continuous passive. The dogs is plural, so we use were. The dogs were being fed when it started raining.
10. **B** Correct Answer: The report is being written now. ✓ Explanation: The present continuous passive uses is/are + being + past participle. The report is singular, so we use is being written. The word now shows it is happening at this moment.

Part 2: Fill in the Gap

11. **A** Correct Answer: is being ✓ Explanation: We use is being + past participle for the present continuous passive with a singular subject. The house is being painted right now.

12. **A** Correct Answer: are being ✓ Explanation: Windows is plural, so we use are being + past participle for the present continuous passive. The windows are being cleaned at the moment.
13. **A** Correct Answer: was being ✓ Explanation: We use was being + past participle for the past continuous passive with a singular subject. The meal was being cooked when I arrived.
14. **A** Correct Answer: were being ✓ Explanation: Roads is plural, so we use were being + past participle for the past continuous passive. The roads were being repaired when the storm started.
15. **A** Correct Answer: is being ✓ Explanation: Right now tells us it is happening at this moment, so we use the present continuous passive: is being + past participle. The cake is being decorated right now.
16. **A** Correct Answer: were being ✓ Explanation: Letters is plural and the action was in progress in the past, so we use were being + past participle. The letters were being written when the phone rang.
17. **A** Correct Answer: is, being ✓ Explanation: Car is singular and at this moment shows it is happening now. We use is not being + past participle for the negative present continuous passive. The car is not being washed at this moment.
18. **A** Correct Answer: were being ✓ Explanation: Students is plural and the action was in progress in the past, so we use were being + past participle. The students were being tested when the fire alarm went off.
19. **A** Correct Answer: Is ✓ Explanation: School is singular and at the moment shows it is happening now. We use Is + subject + being + past participle for present continuous passive questions. Is the new school being built at the moment?
20. **A** Correct Answer: were being ✓ Explanation: Toys is plural and the action was happening in the past when something else occurred. We use were being + past participle for the past continuous passive. The toys were being fixed by dad when we came home.

Part 3: Fill in the Blank

21. **is being** Correct Answer: is being ✓ Explanation: We use is being to form the present continuous passive with a singular subject. The structure is is/am/are + being + past participle.
22. **are being** Correct Answer: are being ✓ Explanation: We use are being for the present continuous passive with a plural subject like the students. The structure is are + being + past participle.
23. **was being** Correct Answer: was being ✓ Explanation: We use was being for the past continuous passive with a singular subject. It means the action was in progress at a past moment.
24. **were being** Correct Answer: were being ✓ Explanation: We use were being for the past continuous passive with a plural subject like the children. It describes an ongoing action in the past.

25. **are being** Correct Answer: are being ✓ Explanation: Look! tells us the action is happening now, so we use the present continuous passive. With the windows (plural), we use are being.
26. **am being** Correct Answer: am being ✓ Explanation: With the subject I, we use am being in the present continuous passive. The structure is am + being + past participle.
27. **was being** Correct Answer: was being ✓ Explanation: The party is singular, and the action was in progress in the past, so we use was being in the past continuous passive.
28. **are being** Correct Answer: are being ✓ Explanation: The emails is plural and the action is happening now, so we use are being in the present continuous passive. Structure: are + being + past participle.
29. **were being** Correct Answer: were being ✓ Explanation: The packages is plural and the action was in progress in the past, so we use were being in the past continuous passive.
30. **is being** Correct Answer: is being ✓ Explanation: The new menu is singular and the action is happening now, so we use is being in the present continuous passive. Structure: is + being + past participle.

Score Guide

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|----------------------|--|
| 27–30 Correct | Excellent! You have mastered this topic. |
| 23–26 Correct | Very good! Review the rules you missed. |
| 18–22 Correct | Good start. Re-read the lesson and examples. |
| 0–17 Correct | Study the lesson again before retaking the test. |