W 1 - THE PASSIVE VOICE; CAUSATIVE (Have st done)

- active voice we say what people and things do
- **passive voice** we say what happens to people and things
- the distinction between the passive and active voice applies only to transitive verbs, but not all, there are some transitive stative verbs which are not used in the passive (e.g. fit, have, lack, suit, resemble) and some prepositional verbs (e.g. Everybody agreed with me.)

Change from active to passive:

- a) the active subject, if retained, becomes the passive agent
 e.g. The butler murdered the detective. → The detective was murdered by the butler.
- b) The active object becomes the passive subject.
 e.g. My grandfather built *this house*. → *This house* was built by my grandfather.
- c) the preposition "by" is inserted before the agent (if mentioned), when we talk about instrument, we use "with" e.g. He was shot by the policeman with a rifle.
- the agent is an optional element and is commonly omitted
- the agent can be the person or thing that does the action or that causes what happens
 - e.g. I was shocked by his attitude.

Note:

- get (+ past participle) is frequently used with the passive meaning in informal
 English, it often has a reflexive meaning get caught, get dressed, get run over,
 get killed, get invited, get drowned
 - e.g. My watch got broken while I was playing with the children. He got caught by the police driving at 120 mph. I never get invited to parties.
 - !! This form is not used about longer, more deliberate or planned actions!
- as mentioned above, some stative transitive verbs occur only in the active e.g. They have a nice house. He lacks confidence.

- in the "statal passive" the –ed form refers to a state resulting from an action e.g. The building *is demolished*.

Such sentences in the past tense can be ambiguous (= have two meanings)
e.g. Her arm *was broken*. a) dynamic passive – Someone broke her arm. = action

b) statal passive – Her arm was in a state of fracture.

Notice the difference between:

- a) I was worried by mosquitoes all night.
- b) I was worried about you all night.

Uses of the passive

- 1) the identity of the agent of the action is not known
 - e.g. The room was decorated a few months ago.
- 2) the speakers (or writers) want to <u>avoid identifying the agent</u> because they do not want to assign or accept responsibility
 - e.g. My letter has not yet been answered.
- 3) there is no reason to mention the agent the identification is not important or it is obvious from the context
 - e.g. Many more illnesses can be cured now than in the past.
- 4) in <u>scientific and technical writing</u> to avoid the constant repetition of the subject "I" or "we"
- 5) to put emphasis on the agent of the action

Other notes on the passive

- if a verb has two objects, both can become the subject of passive verb
 - e.g. She gave her sister the car. \rightarrow a) Her sister was given the car. (more common)
 - b) The car was given to her sister.

The choice depends on what has been said before or what needs to be put last in the sentence.

- passive structures are often possible after it+ a clause
 - e.g. It was thought that she was a spy.

It was felt that he was the right man for the job.

- passive structure + the infinitive

e.g. I was asked to send a stamped addressed envelope.

He is believed to be dangerous. (= It is believed that he is dangerous.)

We were told not to come back.

The company is said to be in trouble. (=It is said that the company is in trouble.)

Mary is said to be some kind of secret agent.

He was seen to come. (!careful – in the active - They saw him come.)

He was made to tell them everything. (!careful – in the active – They made him tell them)

He is expected to accept the position. (= It is expected that he will accept..)

- like, enjoy, remember + ing
 - e.g. Most people don't like being criticized.
- some verbs can be used both transitively and intransitively, e.g. *open* notice the possible difference between the active and passive sentence:
 - e.g. The door opened.
 The door was opened.
- some active verbs have a passive meaning
 - e.g. The wine is selling quickly.

The book reads well.

These clothes wash well.

The causative - Have st done

- we can't (aren't able to) do something ourselves, so we arrange for somebody else to do it for us
- e.g. Carol had her wedding cake made by her grandmother.

We need to have the car repaired as soon as possible.

I'm going to have my hair cut next week.

How often do you have that coat cleaned?

I must have the computer serviced.

Compare: I must cut my hair. v. I must have my hair cut.

We have to repair the roof. V. We have to have the roof repaired.

- the causative may also mean that something happens to us without wanting or arranging it, usually it is something negative or not nice:
 - e.g. He had his purse stolen while he was going to work by bus.