

## Chapter 18: The Present Passive System

Chapter 18 covers the following: the nature of the passive voice, the formation and translation of the Latin present passive system, the ablative of personal agent, and at the end of the lesson, we'll review the vocabulary which you should memorize in this chapter.

There are three important rules to remember here: (1) the subject is acted upon in a passive sentence; (2) the letter 'r' is the most common indicator of the passive voice in the Latin present-tense system; and (3) passive verbs expect agents.

Passive is a voice. It's the opposite of active, or really better, the complement, the "yin" to active's "yang." In essence, what the passive voice does is move the action of the verb backwards toward the subject rather than forward toward a direct object. Conversely, active verbs move the action of the verb from the subject toward a direct object. Thus, in principle, passive verbs do not take direct objects.

In English, passive verb forms typically involve some form of the verb "to be," such as:

- "I *am* praised," which is passive, vs. "I praise," which is active.
- "we *were* warned," which is passive, as opposed to "we warned," which is active.
- "they will *be* held," which is passive, as opposed to "they will hold," which is active.

It's important in English to recognize that when "be" is added to a verb form, it doesn't always make the verb passive. The addition of a form of the verb "to be" can also make the verb continual. Here's how to tell those forms apart: a "be" form, combined with a verb that has a participle ending "-ing," is active, whereas a "be" form, combined with a verb that has a participle ending "-ed," is passive. For example, "I am praising" which is active, vs. "I am praised, being praised" which is passive; or the active form "we were warning" vs. the passive form "we were warned." There's a very easy way to be certain you're dealing with a passive form and not a continual form: if it makes sense to add "by someone" after the verb form. Whenever you can, the verb form is passive. For example, it makes sense to say "We were warned *by someone*," whereas it makes no sense to say "We were warning *by someone*." We'll talk about these "by" forms more later.

Now let's look at how the passive voice works grammatically. We'll start with an active sentence: "Students study Latin." If we take the active verb "study" and we make it passive by adding the verb "to be" and adding "-ed" to the end of the verb with the result that "study" becomes "is studied," then turn the direct object of the active sentence "Latin" into the subject of the passive sentence, we end up with the passive sentence "Latin is studied." Notice it means the same thing: Latin is being studied. But it leaves one thing out: who is doing the studying. If you want to include that in the passive sentence, you must take the subject of the active form ("students"), put it after the passive verb ("is studied"), and append "by" to the front of "students." The result is: "Latin is studied by students." The grammatical term for "by students" is the agent. We'll talk about that more later.

Notice that, while both sentences say the same thing, the action of the verb runs in exactly contrary directions. In the active sentence, it moves from left to right, from the subject to the

direct object. But when the verb is changed to passive, the action runs right to left, toward the subject and from the agent. Let's practice doing that — changing the direction of the verb without changing the meaning of the sentence — by moving the verb from active voice to passive voice. I'll give you an active sentence, you turn it into the passive.

Here's the first sentence: "He explained the passive voice." Start with the direct object. What's the direct object here? That's right: "the passive voice." Make it the subject, add a form of "to be" to the verb — make sure it's in the right tense — and make the subject the agent, that is, put "by" in front of it. The result is: "The passive voice was explained by him."

Next sentence: "The enemy could not take Rome." What's the direct object? Rome. Add a form of "to be" to the verb "could not take." Good: "could not be taken." And make the subject in the active sentence the agent in the passive. That's right: "by the enemy." "Rome could not be taken by the enemy."

Do you see how to do this now? Let's try another: "You ought to make better choices." Can you do it on your own? What's the direct object? Add "be" to the verb. Make the subject the agent. That's right: "Better choices ought to be made by you."

All sorts of different kinds of sentences can be turned from active to passive, such as questions. For example: "What did the general say?" What's the verb? "Did say." What's the direct object of "say"? That's right: "what" is the direct object of "say." In other words, the direct object is "what." "What" will become the subject in the passive sentence. [That's not a question. That's a statement.] And the subject of the sentence? What's the subject? No, it's not "what." That's right: it's "the general." He's the one doing the saying. In the passive sentence, the general will become the agent. So, what's the passive form of this sentence? That's right: "What was said by the general?"

Commands can also be turned into the passive: "Let virtue rule your heart." What's the verb? "Rule." What's the direct object? "Your heart." What's the subject? "Virtue." So, what's the passive form of this sentence? "Let your heart be ruled by virtue."

And finally, long sentences can be made passive as well. For instance: "In the active voice, the subject of the sentence performs the action of the verb." So what's the verb in this sentence? It's not "verb," is it? It's "performs." What's the direct object? "The action" — the action of the verb. And what's the subject? Of course, "the subject." In the passive form, that needs to be turned into the agent. So, what would be the passive form of this sentence? "In the active voice, the action of the verb is performed by the subject of the sentence."

Note that in all six of these sentences, the active form has a direct object. A verb cannot become passive if it doesn't have a direct object in its active form. That's because the direct object becomes the subject when the verb is converted into the passive voice, and there has to be a subject in a sentence.

Verbs that don't take direct objects are called "intransitive." Here are some examples of intransitive verbs in English: "I arrived in Rome." "Arrived" has no direct object. You can't

“arrive” something. Thus, “arrived” can't be converted into the passive. “Rome was arrived by me”? I don't think so.

Here's another example: “He sighed sadly, and died.” “Was sighed”? “Was died”? Is wrong!

“She fell down and remained on the ground.” “Was fallen”? “Was remained”? Nope, can't do it.

Just like English, Latin also has intransitive verbs, of which one major subset is linking verbs. Remember, linking verbs take predicates, not direct objects. Therefore, they can't be made passive. There's no direct object to be converted into the subject. In other words, you can't be “be-ed.” Besides *sum*, *possum* and *valeo* are also intransitive and do not take passive forms. “Be be abled”? “Be be stronged”? “Be prevailed”? Be nonsense!

Where English uses “be” to create passive forms in the present tenses, Latin does not. It uses instead a special set of personal endings, the passive counterpart of *-o*, *-s*, *-t*, *-mus*, *-tis*, *-nt*. And here are those endings: *-r*, *-ris*, *-tur*, *-mur*, *-mini*, *-ntur*. Let's say those together: *-r*, *-ris*, *-tur*, *-mur*, *-mini*, *-ntur*. These are as important for you to remember as their active counterparts: *-o*, *-s*, *-t*, and so on. Please commit them to memory as soon as possible.

Note that the second person singular, *-ris*, sometimes appears in a shorter form *-re*. Many classical authors like Vergil use *-re* quite often. However, in this class, we're going to stick with just one ending — I think that one is enough, don't you? — and we'll use only *-ris*.

When those endings are attached to a present base, they produce the following verb forms. While Mr. Wheelock doesn't introduce the present passive system of third, third-*io*, and fourth conjugations here in Chapter 18 — he waits until Chapter 21 to do that — I think it's better to introduce all the present passive system at once. It makes the memorization easier if you see all the present passive system forms together across all the different conjugations. And it makes Chapter 21 pure review, something you'll be very grateful for when we get there.

As to the endings themselves, there are very few which could be termed irregularities. For instance, the first-person singular ending combines the *-o* of the active with the *-r* of the passive, producing *-or* across all the conjugations. Also, in third conjugation, from the active second-person singular *agis* you would expect to have *\*agiris*, but in the passive the Romans used the thematic vowel *-e-* instead. But that doesn't really count as much of an irregularity, because third conjugation regularly interchanges *-i-*, *-e-*, and *-u-* as thematic vowels throughout its forms.

And here is a translation of a verb, *amo*, in the present passive: “I am loved,” “you are loved,” “he/she/it is loved,” and so on. This same translation would apply to verbs in the other conjugations. Notice that, in addition to the simple form of the translation, “I am loved,” there is a continual form, “I am being loved.” We'll ignore that in this class, and we certainly will ignore also the emphatic passive, “I do be loved,” because that's just not right.

Here are the passive endings for the imperfect tense: *-bar*, *-baris*, *-batur*, *-bamur*, *-bamini*, *-bantur*. And here are those endings attached to verb bases in the five conjugations. The translation of the imperfect passive presents no surprises: “I was loved, I was being loved (the

continual form), I kept on being loved, I used to be loved” — all these translations apply to all the conjugations.

Here are the endings for the future tense in the passive voice for first and second conjugation: *-bor, -beris, -bitur, -bimur, -bimini, -buntur*. Note that there's one irregularity — in the second-person singular, of course — *-beris*, which should be *\*-biris*. But otherwise the endings are quite predictable, including *-bor* and *-buntur*, the forms you would expect when the active forms are *-bo* and *-bunt*.

Third, third-*io* and fourth conjugation utilize what one would expect in the future — that is, not the *-bo, -bis, -bit* business found in first and second conjugation — but *-e-* as the future tense marker (or *-a-* in the first-person singular), which produces these endings: *-ar, -ēris, -etur, -emur, -emini, -entur*. When attached to verb bases of third, third-*io*, and fourth conjugation, these forms result. Remember, you're responsible for knowing these forms even though Mr. Wheelock doesn't introduce them in Chapter 18.

Note that here a long vowel comes into play. The *-ē-* preceding the ending in third conjugation future second-person singular *-ēris* is mandatory, because it distinguishes the future from the present. In other words, *-ēris* means “you will be (whatever the verb means),” for instance, “you will be led” — whereas “*-ēris*” means “you are (whatever the verb means),” for instance, “you are led.” Even though the *-ē-* also exists in third-*io* and fourth, that *-ē-* is not mandatory because those forms are different, for instance, *sciris* (“you are known”), *sciēris* (“you will be known”). The future passive translates as follows: “I will be loved,” “you will be loved,” “he/she/it will be loved,” and so on, translations which apply to the other conjugations as well.

In addition to finite forms, present infinitives can also be passive. Here are the endings for the present passive infinitive in all five conjugations. In first conjugation, present passive infinitives end: *-ari*, producing forms like *laudari*, meaning “to be praised;” *-ēri* in second conjugation, producing forms like *monēri*, “to be warned.” And adding in third, third-*io* and fourth, as we did with the finite verb forms: in third conjugation, *-i* as in *agi*, “to be done;” fourth-conjugation, *-iri*, as in *sentiri*, “to be felt;” and third-*io* conjugation *-i* again as in *iaci*, “to be thrown.”

Note that there's a dominant pattern where the final *-e* of the active infinitive is changed to *-i*. This applies to first, second, and fourth conjugations, but third and third-*io* do not follow that pattern. Instead, they involve two notable complications. First, they lose their *-r* altogether in the passive infinitive. So *agere*, the active infinitive meaning “to do,” reduces entirely to *agi* when it's made passive, “to be done.” Similarly *iacere*, “to throw,” collapses down to *iaci*, its passive counterpart, “to be thrown.” The loss of *-r* in both of these forms makes it very hard to remember that forms like *iaci* and *agi* are infinitives, and worse yet, these passive infinities look like first-person perfect active forms. So *agi*, “to be done,” bears a disturbing resemblance to *ēgi*, “I have done.”

Similarly, *iaci*, “to be thrown,” looks like *iēci*, “I have thrown.” *Duci*, “to be led,” looks like *duxi*, “I have led.” That means you have to be careful when looking at a form that ends with just *-i* and belongs to third, third-*io*, or fourth conjugation, and be certain whether it's the present base to which the *-i* is added, in which case it's the present passive infinitive “to be (whatever-

ed),” or if it's the perfect base, in which case it's the first person singular perfect active, “I have (whatever-ed).”

And the last point of grammar we'll address in this lesson is the ablative of agent, which is what most passive verb forms expect, as opposed to direct objects which are what most transitive active verb forms expect. Let's start with a simple sentence: “You did it.” Here we have a nominative subject “you,” an active verb “did,” and an accusative direct object “it.” If we want to retain the same sense but use a passive verb form instead of an active one, we start by changing “did” to “was done.” To retain the same sense in the passive sentence, we need to take the direct object “it” and make it the subject of the passive form, producing “it was done.” But in order to complete the sense that the active version of the sentence has, we need to say who's doing the action of the verb, and thus in the passive form we need to add an agent, “by you.” The full passive form would then be “It was done by you.” To express the agent in a passive verb construction, Latin uses the ablative case. If the “doer” of that action is a person, Latin uses the preposition *a/ab* plus the ablative. This construction is called the “ablative of personal agent.”

Here's an example: *Romani ab amicis suis servabantur*, meaning “The Romans were saved by their friends.” If, however, the agent (or the doer) in the passive sentence is not a person, Latin still uses the ablative to express that doer but no preposition *a/ab*. This “ablative of impersonal agent” is really the equivalent of the ablative of means, and should be called that. So, for example, *Romani labore magno servabantur*, meaning “The Romans were saved by (or with) great effort.” Note: no preposition before the ablative *labore*.

And that concludes the grammar part of this chapter. Now let's look at the vocabulary.

The first word is *consilium, consilii*, n., meaning “plan, purpose, advice, judgment.” It's a second-declension neuter noun. This is the Latin word that gives us our derivative “counsel,” meaning “advise, advice.” The one with the *-s-* is the verb, the one with the *-c-* is the noun. Learn that. The English homonym “council” comes from an altogether different Latin verb, *concalare* meaning “to call together.” What would be the accusative singular of *consilium*? That's right: *consilium*. It's neuter.

The next word is *genus, generis*, n., meaning “origin, kind, sort, class.” It's third-declension neuter. The root *gen-* means at heart “birth.” It's a root that's widely attested among Indo-European languages, and because of that English has a number of derivatives from Latin and Greek which exhibit this root. So for instance, from its sense “the process of giving rise to something,” we get words like “genesis” and “progeny.” From its sense “the nature of something” we get words like “gender” or “genius.” And, from its sense of birth-group or race, we get words like “genus” or “genocide.” What would be the accusative plural of this word? Good, *genera*. And so what would be the genitive plural of this word? That begs another question, doesn't it? Is *genus* *i*-stem? Well, it's third-declension, and it's neuter, but it doesn't end *-e*, *-al* or *-ar* in its nominative singular. So, no! It's not *i*-stem. The genitive plural would be *generum*.

The next word is *alius, alia, aliud*, meaning “other, another.” It's a first/second-declension adjective. As we noted when this word was first introduced in Chapter 9, its sense is “another

(out of three or more possibilities).” The word for “*the* other (out of two possibilities)” is “*alter*.” And as I’m also sure you’ll remember from Chapter 9, the genitive singular of this word is *alterius*. It borrows the genitive singular of *alter* in order to avoid the form \**aliius*. Its dative singular *alii* is not irregular when you remember it follows the pattern, seen in many demonstrative pronouns, of a genitive singular in *-ius* and a dative singular in *-i*. What would be the dative plural of this word? That’s right: *aliis*. And what would be the genitive plural masculine? If it’s not third-declension, none of the *i*-stem irregularities come into play, so this must be regular second-declension, meaning the correct answer is *aliorum*.

The next word is *a, ab*. It means “(away) from” or “by” when the word introduces a personal agent. It’s a preposition that takes an ablative object. This is “by” in the sense of “through, at the hands of,” not “by” in the sense of “beside, alongside.” This “by” is always associated with a passive verb form. If *ab* is not associated with a passive verb form, it means “from” and shows separation.

The next word is *etiam*. It means “even,” in the sense of “also, too.” It’s an adverb.

Next on the vocabulary list come four verbs. The first is *lego, legere, lēgi, lectum*. It means “pick out, choose, read.” It’s third conjugation. Note the long vowel in the perfect base. Be careful! It distinguishes forms like *lēgit* (“he reads”) from *lēgit* (“he [has] read”). In forms like that, the long mark is mandatory. Note also that this verb has two different senses: “choose” and “read.” Actually, originally they’re connected because to the Romans to “choose” a book was to read it. The reason that “read” and *lego* aren’t connected to each other linguistically — the same is true of most words that mean “read” across Indo-European languages — is very simple. Reading and writing were not invented or introduced in Indo-European cultures until after the break-up of the common Indo-European language. This word is worth learning quickly and fully, not only because it’s a basic verb in Latin but because it produces several important compounds, including *intellego*, a combination of *inter* and *lego*, meaning “to choose between,” which to the Romans signified understanding something, and *neglego*, a combination of *nec* plus *lego*, meaning “to choose not to do something,” thus “neglect” it.

The next word is *moveo, movere, movi, motum*, meaning “move, arouse, affect.” It’s a second-conjugation verb. It has a physical sense “move,” giving us words like “motion,” and a mental sense “arouse, affect,” giving us words like “emotion.”

The next word is *terreo, terrēre, terrui, territum*, meaning “frighten, terrify.” It’s a second-conjugation verb. Be careful! It has the opposite meaning of *timeo* which means “fear, be afraid of.” Don’t confuse these verbs.

The last verb on this vocabulary list is *videor, vidēri, visus sum* meaning “be seen, seem, appear.” It’s second-conjugation, and it’s the passive of a verb we’ve already encountered: *video, vidēre* (“to see”). *Videor* has several expectations grammatically. It can expect a complementary infinitive, “seem to be”; a predicate nominative, “seem good”; or both, “seem to be good.” In its passive sense, it can expect an agent, as in “be seen by you,” but when it adopts the sense “seem, appear,” it never takes a passive agent.

And the final word on this vocabulary list is *ludus, ludi, m.*, meaning “game, sport, school.” It's a second-declension masculine noun. Mr. Wheelock has the meanings of this word in the correct order chronologically, because originally it meant “game, sport.” In other words, the sense “school” developed later out of the sense of “playing sports.” Or to put it another way, school truly does begin at recess. And it ends there too, because we have finally reached the end of Chapter 18.

Do the rules that were cited at the beginning of this chapter now make sense to you? If not, please review this presentation. If so, please proceed to the next slide.

For the next class meeting, bring in a copy of the worksheet for Chapter 18 please. Here's a link to that worksheet.

*Hōc terrēri non debetis si legitis et studetis magnā cum curā, O cari discipuli.*