

Passive Voice Tense Names & Forms in German

Hint for recognizing the German passive voice:

Look for the passive form of the verb. The passive verb consists of a participle (Partizip II) and a form of *werden*. The participle (Partizip II) will look something like: *gemacht, gesehen, gekauft, gesprochen, repariert*, etc. *Werden* may appear in any of its forms such as *wird, wurde, werden*, and its special passive form *worden*. The form *worden* translates to *been*.

Die Stadt wurde im Jahr 1640 gegründet.
Während der Renovierung wird der Verkehr umgeleitet.
Das Problem ist erledigt worden.

The city was founded in 1640.
During the renovation, traffic is being diverted.
The problem has been taken care of.

Also look for the subject of the sentence to be something other than the agent.
The agent performs the action of the verb. In passive, the subject never performs the action of the verb.

Ein Passant ist überfallen worden.
Bald werden die Löhne erhöht.
Wann wurde der Film gedreht?

A passer-by has been attacked.
Wages will soon be raised.
When was the movie made?

Present Passive (Präsens)

Verb Form: present conjugation of *werden* + participle of the lexical verb
Präsens can indicate present time. It can also imply future time.

Das Treppenhaus wird jeden Morgen gefegt.
Lebensmittel werden am Wochenende eingekauft.

The stairwell is swept every morning.
The stairwell gets swept every morning.
Groceries will be purchased on the weekend.
Groceries will get purchased on the weekend.

Preterit Passive (Präteritum)

Verb Form: preterit conjugation of *werden* + participle of the lexical verb
Präteritum (*wurd-*) indicates past time.

Das große Schaufenster wurde gestern geputzt.
Drei alte Bäume wurden letzte Woche vom Park entfernt.

The large show window got cleaned yesterday.
The large show window was cleaned yesterday.
Three old trees were removed from the park yesterday.
Three old trees got removed from the park.

Perfect Passive (Perfekt)

Verb Form: present conjugation of *sein* + participle of the lexical verb + *worden*
Perfekt indicates past time.
The form *worden* never changes and means *been* or *got*.
A conjugated form of *sein* must always appear in constructions with *worden*.
Sein, in this instance, translates to a form of English *have*.

Dieses Hemd ist schon gewaschen worden.
Die Wände sind noch nicht repariert worden.
Sind die Zeitschriften schon geliefert worden?
Ist dein Auto schon repariert worden?

This shirt has already been washed.
The walls have not yet been repaired.
Have the magazines been delivered yet?
Has your car been fixed already?

Present Passive + Modal

Verb Form: present conjugation of modal + participle of the lexical verb + *werden*

Modal verbs help indicate an attitude held by the speaker such as ability, obligation, necessity, desire, etc.

Das kann leicht gemacht werden.

Seine Fragen müssen nicht beantwortet werden.

Wann soll die Arbeit eingereicht werden?

Darf das Thema besprochen werden?

That can easily be done.

His questions need not be answered.

When should the paper be turned in?

Can that topic be discussed? (Is it acceptable?)

Preterit Passive + Modal

Verb Form: past conjugation of modal + participle of the lexical verb + *werden*

The preterit form of the modal puts the entire construction into past time.

Der Film durfte nicht gezeigt werden.

Die Anzüge mussten sorgfältig gereinigt werden.

Die Frage konnte einfach nicht beantwortet werden.

The movie was not allowed to be shown.

The suits needed to be carefully cleaned.

The question simply could not be answered.

Past Perfect Passive (Plusquamperfekt)

Verb Form: past conjugation of *sein* + participle of the lexical verb + *worden*

Plusquamperfekt indicates remote past time.

Das Haus war schon abgerissen worden.

Seine Eltern waren von der Polizei schon notifiziert worden.

Im Sommer waren die Straßen noch nicht repariert worden.

The house had already been torn down.

His parents had already been notified by the police.

The streets had still not been repaired last summer.

Future Passive

Verb Form: present conjugation of *werden* + participle of the lexical verb + *werden*

Future passive indicates future time and can also imply probability.

Das Haus wird nächste Woche angestrichen werden.

Unsere Kinder werden im Urlaub von dem Nachbarn unterbracht werden.

In Südafrika wird der Film wohl verboten werden.

The house will be painted next week.

The house will get painted next week.

Our children will be taken care of by the neighbor during the vacation.

In South Africa, that movie is probably banned.