

# MASTERING THE SPANISH PASSIVE VOICE

Grammar Reference & Written Production Exercises · Level B1

## 1. What is the Passive Voice?

**Voice** refers to the relationship between the subject and the verb.

**Active Voice:** The subject *performs* the action. *e.g. Columbus discovered America.*

**Passive Voice:** The subject *receives* the action. It shifts focus from *who* does it to *what happens*.  
*e.g. America was discovered by Columbus.*

**The English Equivalent:** In English we form the passive with **"to be" + past participle**. Spanish does the same, but uses the true passive voice much less frequently — preferring active voice or a "se" structure for everyday speech.

## 2. The Two Types of Passive in Spanish

### A. The "Ser" Passive — Formal / Written

Structure Formula	Subject (Receiver) + SER (conjugated) + Past Participle + (POR + Agent)
<b>The Golden Rule</b>	The past participle acts like an adjective. It <b>MUST</b> agree in gender and number with the new subject.
<b>Masculine Singular</b>	El libro fue escrito por Cervantes. (The book was written by Cervantes.)
Feminine Singular	La ciudad fue destruida por el terremoto. (The city was destroyed by the earthquake.)
<b>Masculine Plural</b>	Los resultados fueron anunciados por el comite. (The results were announced by the committee.)
Feminine Plural	Las ventanas fueron abiertas para ventilar. (The windows were opened to ventilate.)

### B. The "Se" Passive / Pasiva Refleja — Everyday / Spoken

<b>Structure Formula</b>	SE + Verb (3rd person singular or plural) + Subject
<b>The Golden Rules</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The agent ("who" did it) is never mentioned.</li> <li>2. The subject cannot be a person.</li> <li>3. The verb must agree in number (singular/plural) with the subject.</li> </ol>
<b>Singular Subject</b>	Se habla español en este restaurante. / Se alquila apartamento.
<b>Plural Subject</b>	Se venden coches usados aquí. / Se prohíben las fotos.

### 3. Usage Summary: Which one should I use?

If you want to say...	Use this structure...	Example
Who performed the action (using "by").	<b>Ser Passive</b>	El puente fue diseñado por un ingeniero.
A general rule, sign, or fact (agent unknown).	<b>Se Passive</b>	Se aceptan tarjetas de crédito.
A natural, everyday sentence.	<b>Active or Se Passive</b>	Se abrió la puerta. (instead of: La puerta fue abierta.)

## WRITTEN PRODUCTION EXERCISES

*No gap-fill. No multiple choice. Create every sentence from scratch.*

### Exercise 1: The Formal Press Release (Active → "Ser" Passive)

You are a journalist writing formal news reports. Transform these active sentences into the formal **"Ser" Passive**. Pay close attention to the **gender and number** of the past participle!

1. **Active:** La policía recogió los testimonios. (The police collected the statements.)

**Passive:** Los testimonios

\_\_\_\_\_ por la policía.

2. **Active:** Un arquitecto famoso diseñará el edificio. (A famous architect will design the building.)

**Passive:** El edificio

\_\_\_\_\_ por un arquitecto famoso.

3. **Active:** Leonardo da Vinci pintó la Mona Lisa. (Leonardo da Vinci painted the Mona Lisa.)

**Passive:** La Mona Lisa

\_\_\_\_\_ por Leonardo da Vinci.

## Exercise 2: Rules of the City (English → "Se" Passive)

You are writing a guidebook for tourists in a Spanish city. Translate the following English rules using the natural everyday **"Se" Passive**.

1. English is spoken here. -> \_\_\_\_\_ *aquí*.
2. Used computers are repaired. -> \_\_\_\_\_ *ordenadores usados*.
3. Smoking is not permitted. -> *No* \_\_\_\_\_ *fumar*.
4. Apartments are rented in this zone. -> \_\_\_\_\_ *apartamentos en esta zona*.

## Exercise 3: Creative Written Production

Imagine you are writing a short historical article about a famous **monument or invention** in your country. Write 3-4 sentences in Spanish. You must include:

4. At least one sentence in the **Active Voice**.
5. At least one sentence in the **"Ser" Passive** (mentioning who built/created it using "por").
6. At least one sentence in the **"Se" Passive** (mentioning a general fact about it).

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## MORE WRITTEN PRODUCTION EXERCISES (B1)

### Exercise 4: Active → "Ser" Passive Transformation

Practice forming the formal passive. Remember to use the correct tense of **ser** and make the past participle agree in **gender and number**.

1. **Active:** La maestra conto el cuento.

**Passive:** El cuento

\_\_\_\_\_ por la maestra.

2. **Active:** Enrique completara la tarea.

**Passive:** La tarea

\_\_\_\_\_ por Enrique.

3. **Active:** Juan ha preparado la cena.

**Passive:** La cena

\_\_\_\_\_ por Juan.

### Exercise 5: "Ser" Passive → Active Transformation

Now let's reverse the process. Change these formal passive sentences back into the **active voice**. Pay attention to who is performing the action (the agent).

1. **Passive:** *El edificio fue terminado por los operarios.*

**Active:** Los operarios

\_\_\_\_\_ el edificio.

2. **Passive:** *Las pruebas fueron observadas por el testigo.*

**Active:** El testigo

\_\_\_\_\_ las pruebas.

3. **Passive:** *La ley será aprobada el próximo mes por el gobierno.*

**Active:** El gobierno

\_\_\_\_\_ el próximo mes.

## Exercise 6: English → "Se" Passive Translation

Translate the following everyday sentences into Spanish. Since the agent is not mentioned or not important, use the **Passive "Se"**.

1. The show was canceled. -> \_\_\_\_\_ *el programa*.
2. No food is allowed in the classroom. -> *No* \_\_\_\_\_ *comida en el aula*.
3. The good news was given to me. -> *Me* \_\_\_\_\_ *las buenas noticias*.

## Exercise 7: Participle Agreement — Fill in the Blanks

Fill in the blanks. Conjugate **ser** in the requested tense and write the **past participle** that matches the subject's gender and number.

1. (Present) The house is built.  
*La casa* \_\_\_\_\_ *(construir)*.
2. (Preterite) The window was broken yesterday.  
*La ventana* \_\_\_\_\_ *(romper) ayer*.
3. (Present Perfect) The documents have been signed.  
*Los documentos* \_\_\_\_\_ *(firmar)*.

## Exercise 8: Real-World Content Creation

Choose **ONE** option and write your short text below:

**Option A — The Journalist:** You are writing a news report about a famous painting that was stolen from a museum and later found. Write 3 sentences using the **Formal "Ser" Passive**.

**Option B — The Real Estate Agent:** You are writing a classified ad to sell and rent properties. Write 3 sentences using the **"Se" Passive** to describe what is available.

My choice: *Option* \_\_\_\_\_

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