

# Passive voice with modal verbs

CEFR B1-B2 • 20 questions • A4 / US Letter

A modal passive keeps the modal in front and puts be plus the past participle after it. For the past, be becomes have been.

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## The rule

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### The basic pattern

- Form: modal plus be plus past participle: must be sent, can be seen, should be checked.
- The modal never changes, and the past participle does not change either.
- The meaning of the modal stays the same: ability, advice, obligation, possibility or permission.
- The agent moves behind by or disappears, exactly as in other passive sentences.

### Common present modals

- Obligation: must be done, has to be done, should be finished.
- Ability and possibility: can be solved, could be improved, might be delayed.
- Permission: may be used, cannot be taken out of the room.
- Advice and expectation: should be checked, ought to be replaced.

### Past modals in the passive

- Form: modal plus have been plus past participle: must have been sent.
- Use it for deductions and regrets about the past: "The parcel must have been delivered yesterday."
- Could have been avoids the passive of ability in the past: "The accident could have been avoided."
- Should have been done expresses a past criticism: "The report should have been checked."

### Will, going to and other futures

- Will works directly with be: will be finished, will be sent.
- Going to be is common in speech: is going to be repaired.
- Have to keeps its own form in the passive: has to be cleaned, had to be paid.
- The passive of a future plan is very useful for announcements: "The results will be published on Monday."

### Negatives, questions and the agent

- Add not after the modal: must not be touched, cannot be opened.
- Questions put the modal first: "Can the form be sent by email?"
- With have been, not goes after have: could not have been avoided.
- Add by plus the agent only when the doer matters: "The file must be signed by the manager."

## Questions

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Write your answer on the line under each question. Check your work with the answer key on the last page.

1. The form \_\_\_ before Friday.

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2. This door \_\_\_ from the outside.

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3. The problem \_\_\_ in ten minutes.

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4. The parcel \_\_\_ yesterday.

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5. The accident \_\_\_ if the driver had slowed down.

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6. The report \_\_\_ before publication.

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7. The results \_\_\_ on Monday.

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8. The roof \_\_\_ next week.

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9. The room \_\_\_ every day.

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10. \_\_\_ the application \_\_\_ by email?

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11. The window \_\_\_ by the storm.

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12. The application \_\_\_ online.

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**13.** The mistake \_\_\_ earlier.

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**14.** The equipment \_\_\_ before use.

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**15.** This medicine \_\_\_ by children.

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**16.** The painting \_\_\_ by a famous artist.

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**17.** The tunnel \_\_\_ next year.

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**18.** The keys \_\_\_ in the kitchen.

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**19.** The invoice \_\_\_ by the accountant.

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**20.** The road \_\_\_ last winter.

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## Answer key

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### Passive voice with modal verbs · CEFR B1-B2

1. **must be sent** — The modal passive takes modal plus be plus past participle: must be sent.
2. **cannot be opened** — A negative modal passive places not after the modal and keeps be plus the participle opened.
3. **can be solved** — Can be plus the past participle solved forms the present modal passive.
4. **must have been delivered** — The past deduction takes must have been plus the past participle delivered.
5. **could have been avoided** — A past regret in the passive takes could have been plus the participle avoided.
6. **should be checked** — Should be plus the past participle checked expresses present advice in the passive.
7. **will be published** — The future passive takes will be plus the past participle published.
8. **is going to be repaired** — Going to be plus the past participle repaired forms the planned future passive.
9. **has to be cleaned** — Have to keeps its form and is followed by be plus the past participle cleaned.
10. **Can ... be sent** — A modal passive question starts with the modal, then subject, then be plus the participle sent.
11. **might be damaged** — Might be plus the past participle damaged describes a possible passive event.
12. **may be submitted** — May be plus the past participle submitted gives permission in the passive.
13. **should have been noticed** — The past criticism takes should have been plus the past participle noticed.
14. **must be checked** — Must be plus the past participle checked expresses obligation in the passive.
15. **must not be taken** — A negative prohibition in the passive takes must not be plus the participle taken.
16. **might be painted** — Might be plus the past participle painted expresses possibility about the agent.
17. **could be completed** — Could be plus the past participle completed forms a future possibility in the passive.
18. **may be left** — May be plus the past participle left expresses present possibility in the passive.
19. **must be signed** — The by-agent follows the modal passive must be signed.
20. **should have been repaired** — Last winter makes the passive modal past: should have been repaired.