

The history of ... past passives

by Jill Hadfield

Level: Upper-intermediate

Target age: Secondary / Adult

Time needed: 25 minutes

Grammar objective: past passives

Materials: one set of cards per group of three or four students

Summary: a small-group guessing game to practise the past passive

Procedure

1. Inform the students that you are going to tell them about the history of a common product and they must guess the product. Tell them:

It was grown in a field. Then, it was cut down, cleaned and dried. It was sold, put into packets and sold in shops. It was boiled and then eaten with curry.

Let the students guess the answer (*rice*).

2. Ask the students to tell you the form of the verbs in your description – read the description again, if necessary. They should answer *the past (simple) passive*. Write 'the past passive' on the board and elicit how it is formed:

was / were + past participle

3. If you don't think your students are capable yet of producing correct past passive sentences, then follow this step with them before beginning the game. Otherwise, you can skip to step 4.

Write the description that you read out on the board. Read it out again or have the students take turns reading out a sentence each, if you prefer.

Next, rub out the past passives from the description (*was grown, was cut down, cleaned, dried, was sold, put, sold, was boiled, eaten*). Get students to practise describing the rice to their partner, using the correct forms of the missing verbs.

4. Ensure students are familiar with the following verbs (as past participles):

cut down, made, sold, sat on, printed, delivered, written, posted, sold, picked, dried, roasted, mixed, baked, eaten, mined, worn, read, melted, burnt

5. Now, tell the class that they are going to play a game where they have to give descriptions of products using the past passive, as you did at the beginning of the lesson. Divide the students into groups of three or four and give each group a set of cards.
6. They should place these face down in the centre of the group.
7. Get students to take turns turning over a card and recounting the history of the product using past passives. The student who guesses the product gets to keep the card.
8. Who won the most cards? Which product was the hardest to guess and why?

Extension task

Get each group to write a new set of cards for another group – they can stop at four products if they run out of ideas. Groups then play the game again with another group's cards.

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FUN WITH GRAMMAR CARDS



a newspaper	a lump of coal
a letter	a gold ring
a tea leaf	a coffee bean
a cake	a chair