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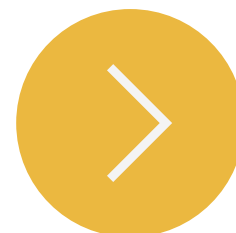
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## VERBS L15.4 – THE IMPERSONAL PASSIVE

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## WHAT IS THE IMPERSONAL PASSIVE?

The impersonal passive is a special form of the **Vorgangspassiv** when we don't have an accusative object that can become the grammatical subject of the sentence.

In my previous lesson, you have learned that we can't create the passive if there is no accusative object. Well, with a small trick, we can:

- We take the pronoun "es" as a placeholder for the accusative object. The same also works with an adverbial phrase (when, how, where, or why something happened).
- The pronoun "es" or the adverbial phrase must be in position 1.
- A dative object remains a dative object in the passive voice, always. Therefore, only an accusative object can become the subject in the passive sentence.
- If we don't have an accusative object, we use the impersonal pronoun "es" as a placeholder for the subject.
- "Es" must be in position 1. "Es" can be omitted if you put the dative / prepositional complement in position 1 instead.

You can find sample sentences on the next page.

## IMPERSONAL PASSIVE WITH DATIVE COMPLEMENTS

| Active                      | Passive                      |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Mein Sohn hilft mir.        | Mir wird geholfen.           |
|                             | Es wird mir geholfen.        |
| Niemand hört dem Lehrer zu. | Dem Lehrer wird zugehört.    |
|                             | Es wird dem Lehrer zugehört. |

The conjugation is based on "es".

## IMPERSONAL PASSIVE WITH PREPOSITIONAL COMPLEMENTS

| Active                                   | Passive                                      |
|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| <b>Der Mann</b> wartet <u>auf mich</u> . | <b>Auf mich</b> wird gewartet.               |
|                                          | <b>Es</b> wird <b>auf mich</b> gewartet.     |
| <b>Er</b> spielt <u>mit dem Kind</u> .   | <b>Mit dem Kind</b> wird gespielt.           |
|                                          | <b>Es</b> wird <b>mit dem Kind</b> gespielt. |

The conjugation is based on "es". If the noun has a preposition in front, it can't be an object. So although we have a noun in the accusative case here, it's not an accusative object.

### THE PRONOUN "MAN"

The impersonal pronoun "man" does not exist in passive voice. Instead, it is left out or replaced with "es".

| Active                                 | Passive                                        |
|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| In Italien isst <u>man</u> viel Pizza. | In Italien wird viel Pizza gegessen.           |
|                                        | <b>Es</b> wird viel Pizza in Italien gegessen. |
| <u>Man</u> raucht in Bayern wenig.     | In Bayern wird wenig geraucht.                 |
|                                        | <b>Es</b> wird in Bayern wenig geraucht.       |

### "ES" WITH THE NORMAL PASSIVE VOICE

You can use the impersonal pronoun "es" in all passive sentences. Usually, we use it when the acting person cannot be or should not be named.

#### Active:

- „Die Polizei hat den Täter gefasst.“

#### Passive:

- „Der Täter wurde (von der Polizei) gefasst.“

- „**Es** wurde der Täter (von der Polizei) gefasst.“

## SUMMARY

- The impersonal pronoun "es" is used if there is no accusative object.
- It is not obligatory! We can omit it, but the conjugation of the verb is always based on "es" if it is impersonal passive.
- In case you omit "es", there is no subject in the sentence!

## TASK



### Native Language Check

- How do you form the impersonal passive in your language?

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