

THE "PASSIVE."

受け身：うけみ

Formation

i) Ichidan Verbs:

Add -rareru to the negative base, e.g. remove ーない from たべない, add inflection to たべ/食べ thus, たべ+られる/食べられる

ii. Godan Verbs:

Add -reru to the negative base, that is to the "-a" syllable of any Godan Verb. e.g.

いう becomes いわ+れる = いわれる

言う becomes 言わ+れる = 言われる

かく becomes かか+れる = かかれる

書く becomes 書か+れる = 書かれる

だす becomes ださ+れる = だされる

出す becomes 出さ+れる = 出される

もつ becomes もた+れる = もたれる

持つ becomes 持た+れる = 持たれる and so on.

N.B. When Godan Verbs add this passive "auxilliary verb" to their base form they subsequently inflect **as if they were Ichidan Verbs.**

Irregular Verbs "suru" & "kuru."

する has the irregular formation される

くる/来る has the irregular formation こられる/来られる.

N.B both irregular verbs will now inflect like regular Ichidan Verbs.

Usage.

The Passive In English, for comparison:

In English, a verb may be transitive, (i.e. it requires an object, as in "*John read the letter.*") or intransitive, (i.e no object is required to complete the meaning as in "*John came*"). In English only a transitive verb may be made passive and this is done as follows:

- i) make the OBJECT of the original sentence (*the letter*) into the SUBJECT of a passive verb, and;
- ii) make the original SUBJECT (John) into an AGENT with the preposition "by." So, "*John read the letter*" becomes "*The letter was read by John.*"

We may also leave out the agent and simply say,
"*The letter was read.*"

In English we might want to make a sentence passive for what might vaguely be called reasons of style rather than meaning, or, it may be because we don't know or do not wish to say who it was who carried out the action but nevertheless want to say that the action took place. In any case, we use the passive very commonly in English.

The Passive (ukemi/受け身) in Japanese:

We have just identified style and the inability or desire not to identify who carried out the action as reasons for using the passive in English. In Japanese, the ukemi/passive is not used so much for these reasons because:

- i. **the subject is normally omitted anyway** unless identification requires it to be stated: e.g. はい、よみました would mean, "Yes, I read it." but the Japanese for the subject "I" and for that matter, for the object "it" are both properly omitted.
- ii. **Many Japanese transitive verbs have an intransitive twin** which can be used when in English we might choose to use the passive for reasons of style to draw attention to the action or its resulting state of affairs rather than the actor. e.g.
しめる v.t. to shut しまる v.i. to be shut
きめる v.t. to decide きまる v.i. to be decided
つける v.t. to attach/turn on, つく v.i. be attached, turned on.

In circumstances when an English speaker would tend to use the passive, the Japanese will naturally choose the intransitive verb in the right hand column unless there was a compelling reason to make the transitive verb in the left hand column passive.

So for these reasons it is important to remember that the passive form in Japanese is not used as often for the same reasons as we use the passive in English. On the other hand, it is used as well in additional and quite different circumstances.

FOUR USES OF THE "PASSIVE" INFLECTION:

1) THE POTENTIAL FORM OF ICHIDAN VERBS.

If your experience is typical of that of students of Japanese, you will have learned to use the construction *verb + koto ga dekiru* to express the meaning of *can do/able to do*. This is in spite of the fact that the *koto ga dekiru* construction is hardly ever used in Japanese conversation though it is appropriate for written Japanese. Normally, the Japanese will use the "e-Row" of GODAN verbs and the passive inflection of ICHIDAN verbs to say *can*, as in the examples below:

Note that the word which might have been the object of the original verb and indicated by the particle "o" is NOT going to be the object of a verb in the POTENTIAL form. It will instead be the subject marked by "ga" or a SHUDAI marked by a particle such as "w/mo/sae/koso" (keijoshi.) In other words, in this respect, the potential form of verbs behaves in the same way as the verbs *dekiru* and *wakaru* as in:
nihongo GA dekiru/wakaru.

GODAN examples with the "-ma-Row" verb *yomu*:

yomu changes the '-mu' to '-me' and inflects as ICHIDAN thus:
yo+mu > yo+me+ru = yomeru which can be used in a sentence thus:

(watashi ni wa) kanji GA hyaku gurai yomeru desho.
I think I can read about 100 kanji.

Sumimasen ga, kono kanji WA yomenai n desu.
I'm sorry but I can't read this kanji.

ICHIDAN examples with the verbs *iru* (to be) and *shinjiru* (to believe)

Hai, ashita no gozenchu wa uchi ni iraremasu.
Yes, I CAN BE at home tomorrow morning.

Saa! Sonna koto wa shinjiraremasen yo.
I just CAN'T BELIEVE such a thing!

The distinction between ICHIDAN and GODAN verbs is explained in the Appendix to this text. More examples of the use of the passive as the potential form of verbs are found in Exercise D5,

For further information see Makino and Tsutsui "*Dictionary of Basic Japanese Grammar*" (Pp370-373) and this author's programme "*Understanding Japanese Verbs & Adjectives.*"

2) **THE ORDINARY PASSIVE, UKEMI/受け身、**

This is like the passive in English and is sometimes referred to as the "Direct Passive."
See Makino and Tsutsui Pp365-367.

- ! In English, only TRANSITIVE VERBS can be used in the passive. In Japanese, when an INTRANSITIVE VERB appears with the passive inflection it is being used as one of the other options, i.e.

the potential, the meiwaku ukemi, or as respect language.

- !! For every Ordinary or Direct passive sentence there is a corresponding active sentence, e.g.

a) **Passive sentence:**

このゆうびんきょくはことしたてられた。
この郵便局は今年立てられた。
This post office was built this year.

b) **Active sentence:**

このゆうびんきょくをことしたてた。
この郵便局を今年立てた。
We/They built this post office this year.

When the agent, or the person/thing by whom the action was carried out is mentioned, it is followed mostly by the **case particle に**:

あのおまわりさん に いろいろしつもんされました。
あのお巡りさん に いろいろ質問されました。
I was asked several questions by that policeman.

But other particles, e.g. **から** or **によって** too are used with the agent. (See below "**The Particles in the Passive Sentence**" (b) for examples)

3) **MEIWAKU UKEMI, 迷惑受け身.**

This use of the passive is strange to the English speaker particularly as:

- ! An Intransitive verb can be made passive;
- !! What would have been a direct object in an active sentence marked by the particle **を**, remains as direct object in the passive sentence.

What the **meiwaku ukemi/迷惑受け身** expresses in Japanese, is a feeling (often **but not necessarily**, negative i.e. "**meiwaku**") about what has happened. In English this negative feeling might be expressed with some extra words. We might for example, say:

"Some b**st**d has stolen my b*****y bike" as opposed to a bland statement such as

"My bike has been stolen." The **meiwaku ukemi** is in effect, rather like the former expression, while the ordinary **ukemi** is like the latter.

FOUR EXAMPLES OF MEIWAKU UKEMI 迷惑受け身：

Note that it is very common to complete the meiwaku ukemi with the verb しまう following the -te form of the verb in the passive. This seems to strengthen the expression of the emotional reaction against whatever happened.

あめにふられました。 or あめにふられてしまいました。
雨に降られました。 or 雨に降られてしまいました。
I got caught in the damned rain.

となりのひとにコーヒーを こぼされました／こぼされてしまいました。
隣の人にコーヒーを こぼされました／こぼされてしまいました。
The person next to me spilled coffee over me. (Said with annoyance.)

ははにボー・フレンドのしゃしんを みられました／みられてしまいました。
母にボー・フレンドの写真を 見られました／見られてしまいました。
My mother saw my boyfriend's photo. (possibly said with insertion of suitable expressions of annoyance.)

きょう、たなかさんにやすまれました／やすまれてしまいました。
今日、田中さんに休まれました／休まれてしまいました。
Tanaka san didn't turn up at work today (and that was a nuisance.)

Example 5. The Indirect or Meiwaku Ukemi does not always express negative feelings or meiwaku:

みてごらん！すきなあきらさんによこにすわられて、ここにこしているね。
見てご覧！好きな章さんに横に座られて、ここにこしているね。
Look! She looks pretty smug doesn't she. Her beloved Akira has sat down beside her.

4) RESPECT LANGUAGE. SONKEIGO, 尊敬語.

A verb may be put into the passive form while the rest of the sentence is constructed as if the verb was active. The effect of this is to create a sense of indirectness which is typically considered in Japanese to be more respectful or polite. For example in a news broadcast, it might be reported that the Emperor has caught a cold in which case it is most likely that the passive form would be used for the verb "to catch," thus:

てんのうへいかがかぜを ひかれました。
天皇陛下が風邪を 引かれました。

きょう、なんじに かえられますか。
今日、何時に 帰られますか。
What time will you return today?

サシミを たべられますか。
刺身を 食べられますか。
Will you have some sashimi?

Don't confuse the above example with :

サシミ が 食べられますか。

CAN you eat sashimi?

Note that the case particle が indicates that sashimi is the subject and therefore the passive

inflection of the ICHIDAN verb is used for the "potential.)

Keigo, (language to express respect or humbleness in a vertical relationship) is in a state of change:

In 1997, a survey showed that almost all Japanese were confused about the correct usage of keigo, and in particular of “**kenjogo**” or humble language.” The same survey also showed that about half of those surveyed thought that this did not matter. There are three possible reasons given for the state of flux in keigo usage:

- (i) **Education:** involving ignorance of “correct” grammar and usage resulting from lack of training;
- (ii) **Linguistic inflation:** over-use of keigo forms resulting in the degradation of “degree of politeness”, leading in turn to new forms being required as old forms begin to seem less than adequately polite. This has resulted in the growth of usage of older forms into areas where they were once not considered correct (e.g. **-sasete itadakimasu**)

Double Keigo:

Another result of relevance here is the so called “**double keigo**” (二重敬語：にじゅうけいご) created by combining two forms of keigo in the one expression, for example by putting an already polite expression into the passive as below:

e.g. “**goran ni narimasuka**” becomes “**goran ni nararemasuka.**”

ご覧になりますか → ご覧になられますか (will you look at it?)

“**okai ni narimasuka**” becomes “**okai ni nararemasuka**”

お買いになりますか → お買いになられますか (will you buy it?) even though the first form might have been considered adequately respectful by itself.

- (iii) **Social changes** resulting in life styles different from those for which older language usage was well adapted. In particular, modern Japanese have to deal and communicate far more frequently with “mi shiranu hito” or people they don’t know and meet on a regular basis.

See also Makino & Tsutsui P364 and P368, and Pp358-360 for related respect language.

THE PARTICLES IN THE PASSIVE SENTENCE:

a) What happens to the original OBJECT of an active sentence?

In English, the **object** of the active sentence becomes the **subject** of the passive sentence thus:

"Someone stole my bike" becomes "My bike was stolen by someone."

Unfortunately, in Japanese there is a complication because in addition to the **Japanese subject, which is indicated by the case particle 格助詞「が」**, there is something called the **shudai/主題** which is indicated by one of the **keijoshi/係助詞**, e.g. 「は・も・さえ・こそ」

So, when the active sentence,

ひとがわたくしのじてんしゃをぬすんだ。
人が私の自転車を盗んだ。
(Someone stole my bicycle)

is turned into the passive, depending on the circumstances, the object, じてんしゃ/自転車 could become the shudai/主題 indicated by 「は」 OR, the subject indicated by 「が」.

Which is correct?

This unfortunately is too big a question to deal with fully here, but a simple partial answer is as follows:

If the noun, in this case the word じてんしゃ can be considered to be the answer to a question like "*Which/what has been stolen?*" then it will need to be followed by a **case particle/格助詞** such as 「が」 if it subject as in this case. In other circumstances it would be followed by 「を」 if it is object, or 「に・から・へ」 etc as the meaning requires. Similarly, if the speaker is reporting a fact for the first time to the listener, or is expressing an immediate reaction to some event as it happens, then again the **case particles** will be used.

On the other hand, if the listener already knows that a particular object, fact or situation is being referred to, then a **keijoshi/係助詞** will follow the word or words expressing that known thing or matter.

So in the case in point, if the speaker were reporting the theft to the police, the **case particle が** would be appropriate,

「わたしのじてんしゃ が ぬすまれました」
「私の自転車 が 盗まれました。」

as it would be if the speaker expressed the situation as s/he walked around the corner to where the bike was left to discover it gone.

On the other hand in response to a query such as "Where's your bike?" the answer could be,

「私の自転車 は 盗まれました。」

unless by now the enormity of the situation had sunk in and the owner of the bicycle had begun to feel annoyed. Then the meiwaku ukemi would be most appropriate, thus:

じてんしゃ を ぬすまれてしまいました。
自転車を 盗まれてしまいました。

More on this topic will be presented elsewhere under the title "**Understanding Japanese Verbs & Adjectives**" It is also covered in this author's text "**Techniques for Japanese - English Translation.**"

Makino and Tsutsui deal with it on P21-27 under the heading "Topic."

Note:

This author does not approve of the use of the word "**topic**" instead of the Japanese "**shudai**" 「主題」 because the English word like others which are used, carry English baggage or connotations with them. As the shudai/ 「主題」 is very un-English in its use, I think it only adds to the difficulty of understanding, if an English word with its own inappropriate meanings is used. Therefore I use the word shudai/ 「主題」 and for the same reason use the term "keijoshi" 「係助詞」 too for the type of particle which indicates the shudai. By this means I avoid using such terms as "topic particle" as the word "topic" itself carries inappropriate English meanings.

Note also that even in the Makino and Tsutsui text which I normally recommend, the conceptual distinction between the role of the shudai and of a grammatical subject is not made clear. See P 364 where both "topic" and "subject" are used for the shudai and on pp21-22 where all the shudai are in fact subjects of the English translation of the example sentences. I believe this gives the learner a wrong (even if unconscious) impression of the role of shudai.

To return to the original question regarding what happens to the original object of an active sentence if it is made passive, note that even an indirect object may become the shudai/主題 of a passive sentence. e.g.

がいじんが あのおまわりさんに しつもんしました。
外人が あのおまわりさんに 質問しました。
A foreigner asked that policeman a question.

If this is turned into the passive, the indirect object あのおまわりさんに can become either shudai or subject, though the former option is most likely, thus:

あのおまわりさんは／が がいじんにしつもんされました。
あのおまわりさんは／が 外人に質問されました。
That policeman was asked a question by a foreigner.

b) What happens to the word which would have been the subject of an active sentence and becomes the agent or source of the action in the passive sentence?

As already stated the source of the action is mostly indicated by the particle **に**. Other particles are possible though not interchangeably.

から:

When the verb involves some kind of motion or direction the use of the particle **に** is ambiguous. e.g.

はは **に** おくるられたてがみです。
母 **に** 送られた手紙です。

It is probable that this is a letter sent **to**, rather than **by** my mother but the particle **に** could mean either. Therefore, to mean "by my mother," this sentence should use the particle **から** instead:

はは **から** おくられたてがみです。
母 **から** 送られた手紙です。

Similarly the following would be appropriate uses of **から** with the passive even though the direction or motion involved is not so obviously physical:

せんせい から ずいぶんほめられましたね。
先生 から ずいぶん褒められましたね。
You got a lot of praise from the teacher didn't you?

いつもツアーリスト から おなじことをきかれますね。
いつもツアーリスト から 同じことを聞かれますね。
You always get asked the same questions by tourists don't you?

によって:

This could be considered the -te form of the verb よる／因る／依る to depend on, to be due to etc. によって is used more in written or formal Japanese, and the circumstances have to be appropriate to the above meanings.

ゆうめいながか によって かかれたえがてんじされている。
有名な画家 によって 描かれた絵が展示されている。
Paintings by famous artists are being exhibited.

どうだいのせんせい によって はつめいされたものです。
東大の先生 によって 発明されたものです。
This was invented by a member of the academic staff of Tokyo University.

SUMMARY:

! **ICHIDAN Verbs:** Passive inflection can be used 4 ways.

- 1 potential
- 2 ordinary/direct passive
- 3 indirect passive/meiwaku ukemi
- 4 respect language

!! **GODAN verbs:** use only 2,3,4 above as they have their own potential form. (Using the “-e-row”)

!!! Only transitive verbs, tadoshi/ 他動詞 can be used in the ordinary or direct passive, but at the same time transitive verbs can be used in the other 3 ways.

!!!! So far as the verb form itself is concerned there is no distinction between the potential, passive, meiwaku passive, and respect language forms of ICHIDAN verbs or between the last 3 of GODAN verbs. There are however strong clues as to which form is involved from the particles used and from context. This is illustrated by Makino & Tsutsui (P369) with the following example:

a) せんせいはさしみ が たべられます。
先生は刺身 が 食べられます。
Potential: *My teacher can eat sashimi.* (subject indicating case particle が is clue.)

b) せんせいはさしみ を たべられた。
先生は刺身 を 食べられた。
As the potential form can use either of the particles が or を, this sentence could be potential also, or meiwaku ukemi or respect language. Thus, it could mean:
My teacher could eat sashimi.
My teacher was unhappy that someone had eaten sashimi.
My teacher ate sashimi. (respectful)

c) せんせいは がくせいに さしみをたべられた。
先生は 学生に 刺身を食べられた。
In this case there is a direct object marked by を and an agent marked by に. This sentence must therefore be meiwaku ukemi.
It means:

The teacher's sashimi was eaten by his students (to his annoyance.)

The Passive forms may be practised in Exercises D3 - D5.

Why Is there no Exercise D1 or D2?

Exercises D1 & D2 are formation exercises based on the classification of verbs into either GODAN or ICHIDAN verbs and are not included in this text. They are however available in a Macintosh based C.D. programme called “Understanding Japanese Verbs & Adjectives” (U.J.V.A.) and a Manual of the same name available from this Author.