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The Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar

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passive infinitive: see INFINITIVE.

passivize

Convert into the passive; be subject to conversion into the passive.

1984 F. R. PALMER We can passivize the main clause with PERSUADE, but not with WANT:

The doctor was persuaded to examine John

**The doctor was wanted to examine John*

- **passivable. passivization.**

This group of terms was coined by Chomsky.

past

(*n. & adj.*) (A tense or form) relating to time gone by. Contrasted with PRESENT.

The grammatical sense relates essentially to the usual meaning of the term, but this association can be misleading. It is more accurate to say that past tenses are MARKED as *non-present*. While they refer primarily to past time, they can also be used for *hypothesis*, i.e. as tenses marked for unreality:

I wish I *knew*

If I *had* my way, I would . . .

and for *social distancing* (the ATTITUDINAL *past*):

Could you lend me some money?

I *wanted* to ask you something

With no further label, the past of a verb means that morphologically marked form or that tense (the *past tense* or *past simple*) which in regular verbs always ends in *-ed*, and whose form is normally listed second when verb forms are given, e.g.

see, *saw*, seen; drive, *drove*, driven

Compare BACKSHIFT, FUTURE IN THE PAST.

past definite See DEFINITE

past-in-the-past See PAST PERFECT.

past participle

That part of the verb which is used in perfect and passive tenses and sometimes adjectivally.

Examples:

Have you *looked*?

Were you *seen*?

lost property

past subjunctive

It is usually the third form listed when verb forms are given in dictionaries, e.g.

see, saw, *seen*

In regular verbs the past participle ends in the same *-ed* inflection as the past tense, and is called the *-ed form* (or *-ed participle*) by some grammarians; others prefer the label *-en form* (based on the distinctive ending of certain irregular verbs such as *spoken, driven*) so as to distinguish it more clearly.

The past participle signifies 'perfectiveness' or completion, but is not restricted to past time (e.g. *You'll have forgotten by this time next year*). It can also have a passive meaning; contrast *bored* (passive) and *boring* (active).

Compare PSEUDO-PARTICIPLE, PARTICIPLE.

past perfect

(A tense) formed with *had* + a past participle. (Also called *pluperfect*, *before-past*, and *past-in-the-past*.)

With no further label, *past perfect* refers to a simple active tense:

I had forgotten (until you reminded me).

Past perfect progressive tenses, past perfect passive tenses, and combinations of the two also occur:

We *had been wondering* about that, when the telegram arrived

The matter *had been overlooked*

It *had been being compiled* by hand.

In general, past perfect tenses refer to a time earlier than some other past time. But like other so-called past tenses, the past perfect in a subordinate clause may signify *hypothesis* (something contrary to fact):

If you had told me before now, (I could have helped)

If you had been coming tomorrow, you would have met my mother.

The past perfect may also stress perfectiveness or completion

They waited until I had finished.

Compare ASPECT.

past progressive

(The tense) formed with a past form of the verb *be* + an *-ing* form.

Examples:

We were waiting. It was raining.

past simple

The morphologically marked tense of the verb.

See PAST.

past subjunctive See SUBJUNCTIVE.

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The description of English Grammar has changed a great deal during the twentieth century: it is a subject about which debate rages and where uncertainties abound. *The Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar* offers the general reader, the student, and the language professional, straightforward, immediate A-Z access to 1,000 grammatical terms and their meanings, across the whole subject.

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