

Alternatives to passive constructions

How to use "man" in German:

Man sagt,... = Someone says that... / It is said that...

Man hatte ihn davor gewarnt = He had been warned in advance / Someone had warned him in advance

To express something we receive, we can use "bekommen / kriegen" with a passive meaning with verbs used with the dative:

Er bekam das Buch geschenkt: He was offered the book / Someone offered him the book (as a gift). It is also possible to say "Ihm wurde das Buch geschenkt" (passive construction). We offer something to someone, "schenken" needs the dative.

Sie kriegte das Geld ausgezahlt = She received the money / she was given the money. One could have said "Ihr wurde das Geld ausgezahlt" (passive construction). You pay a sum of money to someone. Again "auszahlen" needs the dative.

The passive construction can often be replaced by a reflexive verb (sich + verb):

Mein Verdacht hat sich bestätigt. = My suspicion has been confirmed. We could also have said "Mein Verdacht wurde bestätigt" (passive construction).

Das Buch liest sich schnell = The book can be read quickly. We could also have said "Das Buch kann schnell gelesen werden" (passive construction).

To express the idea of possibility, we can use "sich lassen + infinitive verb" to replace the passive construction with "kann":

Das lässt sich leicht ändern = This can be easily changed / It can be easily changed.

Ein Ende lässt sich nicht absehen = The end cannot be foreseen.

Construction with "kommen" to express that something would / will be done. We use "kommen" with the noun corresponding to the verb. It is then introduced by "zu":

Die Verhandlungen kommen heute zum Abschluss = Negotiations will end today. Here, the verb "abschliessen" (to conclude) is replaced by its noun "der Abschluss" (the conclusion).

"sein" with an infinitive preceded by "zu" expresses the idea of possibility or obligation:

Die Anträge sind im Rathaus abzuholen = Forms can be collected at the town hall. OR Forms must be collected at the town Hall.

Adjectives in -bar can replace a passive construction with "kann" to express that something is possible or impossible:

Diese Muscheln sind nicht essbar = These mussels are not edible. (It is not possible to eat them)

Das Argument ist nicht widerlegbar = This argument cannot be refuted. (it is impossible)