

PASSIVE VOICE

by Seda Sürel

INTRODUCTION

The passive voice in Turkish is formed by adding a passive suffix to the verb stem. In passive constructions, the action is foregrounded, while the agent is omitted or backgrounded.

1. Function

The passive voice is used to:

- shift focus from the agent to the action or result,
- describe events where the doer is unknown or irrelevant,
- express neutral, impersonal, or informational statements.

2. Forms

Turkish passive constructions are formed with the suffix groups –Il and –In.

Suffix shapes (vowel harmony):

- –Il → ıl / il / ul / ül
- –In → in / in / un / ün

3. Morphology

Passive suffixes attach directly to the verb stem before tense and personal endings.

The distribution of passive forms can be observed through the following patterns.

a. Verb stems ending in a vowel

Passive forms appear with –n, which is a reduced variant of the –In suffix.

- oku- → oku-n-
- dinle- → dinle-n-

b. Verb stems ending in –I

Passive forms appear with –In.

- al- → al-in-
- sil- → sil-in-

c. Verb stems ending in other consonants

Passive forms appear with –Il.

- yaz- → yaz-il-
- aç- → aç-il-
- kapat- → kapat-il-

These patterns are observed through usage rather than rule memorization.

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4. Structural Guide

Passive sentences are formed by reorganizing the active structure.

Active

- Öğretmen kapıyı açtı.
- (The teacher opened the door.)

Passive

- Kapı açıldı.
- (The door was opened.)

What changes:

- the object of the active sentence becomes the subject,
- the agent is removed,
- the verb takes a passive form.

5. Syntax

In passive sentences:

- the grammatical subject represents the affected entity,
- the agent may be omitted,
- the agent may optionally be expressed with tarafından.

6. Usage

Agent omitted

Used when the doer is unknown or not important.

- Pencere kapatıldı.
- (The window was closed.)

Neutral and informational statements

Common in formal language, instructions, and announcements.

- Toplantı ertelendi.
- (The meeting was postponed.)

Agent expressed

- Kapı görevli tarafından açıldı.
- (The door was opened by the attendant.)

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Examples

- Bu kitap yazıldı.
- (This book was written.)
- Yemek hazırlandı.
- (The food was prepared.)
- Sorular cevaplandı.
- (The questions were answered.)
- Kitap okunuyor.
- (The book is being read.)
- Kurallar açıklandı.
- (The rules were announced.)

Notes

- Passive suffixes appear before tense and personal endings.
- Forms ending in –n occur with vowel-final verb stems and belong to the –In suffix group.
- Passive constructions foreground the action rather than the agent.