'Voice' refers to the relationship between the subject and the verb in a sentence. A sentence is said to be in the **active voice** if the subject is performing the action of the verb. For example, 'Tex is calling Tammy.' In this sentence, the subject (Tex) performs the action of calling Tammy. Active subjects are called 'agents'.

The **passive voice**, on the other hand, refers to a sentence in which the subject receives the action. In other words, the subject is passive, or acted upon by the agent. For example: 'Tammy is being called by Tex.' In this sentence, Tammy receives the action performed by Tex, the agent.

### formation

= conjugated form of *être* + past participle of main verb (+ *par* + agent)

Note that the past participle always agrees in number and gender with the subject.

- Les Aggies **sont battus** *(par les Longhorns).* The Aggies are beaten *(by the Longhorns).*
- Les Aggies **ont été battus** *(par les Longhorns).* The Aggies were beaten *(by the Longhorns).*
- Les Aggies **seront battus** *(par les Longhorns).* The Aggies will be beaten *(by the Longhorns).*

The agent, when mentioned, is usually preceded by *par*. However, with the verbs *aimer*, *connaître*, and *respecter*, the agent is introduced by *de* instead.

- Tammy est aimée *de* Tex. Tammy is loved by Tex.
- Tex est bien connu *de* toutes les étudiantes et respecté *de* tous les professeurs. Tex is well-known to all the female students and respected by all the professors.

### uses

The passive voice places the focus on the object of the verb rather than the subject:

- **Tex** a écrit le livre *Guerre et Amour.* Tex wrote the book *War and Love.*
- *Le livre Guerre et Amour* a été écrit *par* Tex. The book *War and Love* was written by Tex.

The passive voice draws attention to an event without necessarily mentioning who is responsible for it:

- Oh, Corey et Fiona **ont été enlevés**! Oh, Corey and Fiona were abducted!

The passive voice is often used for inventions, laws, and, logically enough, for events that one falls victim to:

- Les parents de Tex **ont été écrasés.** Tex' parents were run over.
- La loi SOS-tatou **a été votée.** The SOS-armadillo law has been passed.
Un nouveau genre de grammaire a été créé. A new kind of grammar was created.

Ways to avoid the passive
The passive voice is used more frequently in English than in French. Thus, in French, when the agent of the verb can be identified, it is better to use the active voice and make the agent the subject of the verb.

A common way to avoid the passive in French is to use the active voice with on as the subject. For example, 'I was told that Tex loves Tammy' would be translated as 'Onm'a dit que Tex aimait Tammy'.

When making general statements about known facts, pronominal verbs are often used:

Le football américain se joue à onze. Football is played with 11 players.

Le vin rouge se boit à température ambiante. Red wine is drunk at room temperature.

Les frites se mangent avec du ketchup. Fries are eaten with ketchup.

Le français se parle en Louisiane. French is spoken in Louisiana.

Listen to the dialogue:

Tammy et Tex regardent les informations à la télé. Le journaliste déclare:

Aujourd'hui, l’équipe des Aggies a été battue et le moral des joueurs est profondément affecté par cette défaite, la dixième fois de suite cette saison. Par contre, les Longhorns ont beaucoup de succès. Depuis que le trophée Heisman a été remporté par le légendaire Ricky Williams, rien ne les arrête.

Tammy and Tex are watching the news on TV. The journalist states:

Today, the team of the Aggies was defeated and the morale of the players is deeply affected by this defeat, the tenth time in a row this season. In contrast, the Longhorns are having a lot of success. Since the Heisman trophy was won by the legendary Ricky Williams, nothing can stop them.

Fill in the blanks
Fill in the blank with the passive form of the verb between parentheses. Conjugate the verb in the tense given in parentheses.

1. Tex : Ce plat ____________ en France. (apprécier, PRESENT)
2. Tammy : Cette tarte ____________ par Edouard. (faire, PASSE COMPOSE)
3. Tex : La danse country ____________ par les Texans. (inventer, PASSE COMPOSE)
4. Le roman de Tex _________ à des millions d’exemplaires. (vendre, FUTUR)
5. Tex _________ par des nonnes. (élever, PASSE COMPOSE)
6. Les poèmes érotiques de Tex _________, (censurer, PASSE COMPOSE)
7. Tex, Joe-Bob et Edouard _________ chez Tammy ce soir. (inviter, PRESENT)
8. Tex _________ par Bette. (poursuivre/to chase, PRESENT)
9. Tex et Tammy _________ chaleureusement par Paw-Paw. (accueillir, PRESENT)
10. Monsieur, le café _________ ! (servir, PRESENT)
11. Rita : Je ne peux pas venir ce soir, je _________ ! (prendre, PRESENT)
12. Tex : Est-ce je _________ de mon public? (aimer, FUTUR)