



learning target

Aim of this section is to find out which passive voice substitutes exist.

German	English
<p>Man verkauft das Haus.</p> <p>Das Haus verkauft sich leicht.</p> <p>Das Haus lässt sich leicht verkaufen.</p> <p>Das Haus ist leicht zu verkaufen.</p>	<p>The house is being sold.</p> <p>The house can be sold easily.</p> <p>The house can be sold easily.</p> <p>The house can be sold easily.</p>

rules

What do you need passive voice substitutes for?

The "real" passive voice sounds formal and is found, therefore, mostly in written German. In German as well as in English, we prefer the active voice.

In German exist a number of verb constructions (=passive voice substitutes) which are **active voice** but allow to omit the agent as you do it in "real" passive voice sentences.

The man construction

The man construction is very often used in German. You can translate "man" with **one/you/they** (in general) or a passive voice sentence. "Man" (third person singular) acts as the subject of the sentence.

example:

- **Man** darf hier rauchen. (You are allowed to smoke here.)
- **Man** darf hier rauchen. (One is allowed to smoke here.)
- **Man** darf hier rauchen. (Smoking is allowed here.)

further examples:

- **Man** sagt, er habe magische Kräfte. (It is said he had magic power.)
- Was isst **man** in deinem Land zum Frühstück? (What do you have for breakfast in your country?)
- Wo findet **man** Staubsauger? (Where can one (I) find vacuum cleaner?)



The reflexive verb construction

A lot of verbs which are usually not reflexive are used reflexively as a passive voice substitute.

examples:

- Die Tür **öffnet sich** langsam. (The door is being opened slowly.)
- Die CD **verkauft sich** gut. (The CD can be sold easily.)
- Es wird **sich** eine Lösung **finden**. (A solution will be found.)

The "sich lassen + Infinitiv" construction

The best translation for the "sich lassen + Infinitiv construction" is: can be (done, made, ... etc.).

examples:

- Die Tür **lässt sich** leicht **öffnen**. (The door can be opened easily.)
- Die Fleck **lässt sich** nicht **verstecken**. (The spot can't be hidden.)
- Das Auto **lässt sich reparieren**. (The car can be repaired.)

The "sein + zu + Infinitiv" construction

The "sein + zu + Infinitiv construction" can mean: can be (done, made, ... etc.) or must be (done, made, ... etc.)

examples:

- Die Rechnung **ist** noch **zu bezahlen**. (The bill still has to be payed.)
- Das Thema **ist** leicht **zu verstehen**. (The topic can be understood easily.)
- Der Antrag **ist** bis Ende Januar **einzureichen**. (The application has to be passed by end of January.)

Hint

There are a few more constructions which work as a passive voice substitute but I don't want to make it too complicate and stop here.