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You have probably noticed that news reporters often use phrases like: “*It is believed that...*” or “*The suspect is known to be...*”. In fact, there’s a name for these structures – they’re called **passive reporting structures**.

Meaning and use of passive reporting structures

In informal language we often use impersonal expressions like:

- *People think (that)...*
- *They say (that)...*
- *They expect (that)...*

In newspapers, reports and other more formal writing, this idea is often expressed with a structure based on a passive reporting verb. [Passive structures](#) hide the source of the information because it is obvious or the source is unimportant or unknown.

- *It is thought (that)...*
- *It is said (that)...*
- *It is expected (that)...*

It is thought (that)... / It is said (that)...

Consider the following examples:

- **People think that** the clothing chain ‘Looking Good’ is in trouble.
- **They say that** the shop is offering huge discounts.
- **They expect that** the company will close next month.

- **It is thought that** the clothing chain ‘Looking Good’ is in trouble.
- **It is said that** the shop is offering huge discounts.
- **It is expected that** the company will close next month.

The structure here is:

It + verb 'to be' + Past Participle of the reporting verb + that + clause

Verbs which are often used in this way include:

assume, believe, consider, estimate, expect, hope, know, report, say, think

Note: These verbs are most frequently used in simple and perfect tenses in the present and past. Remember that verbs like *believe, hope, know, think, understand* are not used in continuous tenses.

Subject + passive reporting verb + to-infinitive

Using the examples above, we can also use this passive structure:

- *'Looking Good' is thought to be* in trouble.
- *The shop is said to be offering* huge discounts.
- *The company is expected to close* next month.

The structure here is:

Subject + verb 'to be' + Past Participle of reporting verb + to infinitive clause

Verbs used like this include: *believe, expect, report, say, think, understand*.

The past tense

When we are talking about a past action, the structure is:

Subject + verb 'to be' + Past Participle of reporting verb + to Perfect infinitive clause

[Perfect infinitives](#) are used for actions that happened before the reporting.

Compare:

- They believe that competition from online companies was the main reason for its failure.
- *Competition from online companies is believed to have been* the main reason for its

failure.

- They estimate that the company lost about \$1million last year.
- *The company **is estimated to have lost** about \$1 million last year.*

Check out this video from BBC and see how passive reporting structures are used:

See also:

[Passive Voice: Overview](#)

[Present Simple Passive](#)