

Dutch:

**Je zult het formulier moeten → invullen.**

**Het formulier zal (door jou) ingevuld moeten worden.**

English:

You have to take the medicine before the meal. →

The medicine has to be taken before the meal.

Dutch:

**Je moet de medicijnen voor de maaltijd innemen.** →

**De medicijnen moeten voor de maaltijd ingenomen worden.**

### 23.4.1 Let's try it

Turn the following sentences into the passive voice:

- 1 De chirurg opereert haar neus.
- 2 De arts genas zijn wonde.
- 3 Hebben jullie de ambulance opgebeld?
- 4 Ik moet mijn tanden poetsen.
- 5 Wanneer maakte jij een afspraak met de dokter?
- 6 Hoe lang geleden heeft de tandarts je tanden schoongemaakt?
- 7 De arts bezoekt de patiënten elke dag.
- 8 Hoeveel pillen heeft hij voorgeschreven?

## 23.5 Impersonal passive

Dutch has different ways in which it can conceal the agent.

### 23.5.1 *er* and the *passive sentence*

Passive sentences may be introduced by *er*, thereby given a generalized, non-specific meaning difficult to translate (compare the generalizing function of *er* discussed in Chapter 21):

**Er werden veel bloemen geplukt.**

Many flowers were picked. (i.e. there were many flowers that got picked, there was a lot of flower picking)

**Veel bloemen werden geplukt.**

Many flowers were picked. (i.e. many of the flowers got picked)

The passive voice introduced by *er* is also used without any grammatical subject; such a construction must be rendered in English by a paraphrase:

**Er wordt veel gelachen.**

There is a lot of laughing.

**Er werd geroddeld.**

There was gossiping being done.

**Er wordt (aan de deur) geklopt.**

There is a knock (at the door).

**Er is hier veel gerookt.**

There's been a lot of smoking here.

**Er zal hier veel gerookt worden.**

There will be a lot of smoking around here.

**23.5.2 Active construction with *men*, *je* or *ze***

Just as English uses “one” or an impersonal “you” instead of a passive construction, Dutch uses the words *men*, *je* or *ze* and an active construction. *Men* is the formal, written form, while *je* or *ze* is the everyday spoken form:

**Roken doet men hier niet.**

One doesn't smoke here/smoking isn't done here.

**Men zegt dat hij gearresteerd is.**

It is being said that he has been arrested.

**Vers fruit kan je daar niet krijgen.**

You can't get fresh fruit there/fresh fruit isn't to be had there.

**Ze bouwen hier een moskee.**

They're building a mosque here./A mosque is being built here.

**23.5.3 *te* + infinitive**

Dutch uses an infinitive preceded by *te* and a form of the verb *zijn* in a construction that must usually be rendered by a passive in English:

**Grote auto's zijn vaak niet te krijgen.**

Big cars are often not to be had.

**Dat bier was niet te drinken.**

That beer was not to be drunk. (i.e. not drinkable)

**Er is niemand te zien.**

There is nobody to be seen.

**Zoiets is te verwachten.**

Something like that is to be expected.

It is important to note that Dutch uses the passive voice somewhat less than English does, as suggested by both 23.6.2 and 23.6.3. Overuse of the passive voice in Dutch can make what is being said or written too impersonal and possibly difficult to follow.

## **23.6 When is the passive voice used?**

When it is not important who the active person is. Even if you know who it is, it is the action being done that is important rather than who actually does it:

**De test wordt vandaag (door de secretaresse) gecopieerd.**

The test will be/is being copied today (by the secretary).

**Mijn auto is gisteren (door mijn dochter) gewassen.**

My car was washed yesterday (by my daughter).

When it is not known who is actually doing the action:

**De koningin wordt vandaag in het medisch centrum geopereerd.**

The queen is being operated on today in the medical center.

**Er wordt hier een nieuw winkelcentrum gebouwd.**

A new shopping center is being built here.

**Er wordt aangebeld.**

Somebody is ringing the doorbell.

When the statement is a general one:

**In Amerika wordt veel gebarbecued.**

In the U.S.A. a lot of barbecuing is done.

**In Nederland wordt eens in de vier jaar een nieuwe regering gekozen.**

In the Netherlands a new government is elected every four years.

**Er mag in openbare gebouwen niet meer gerookt worden.**

Smoking is no longer permitted in public buildings.

When the implied subject is not a person but an organization or some other formal institution. In this case, the passive makes the text very formal:

**U wordt vriendelijk verzocht het bedrag zo snel mogelijk over te maken.**

You are kindly requested to transfer the amount as soon as possible.

**De reizigers wordt geadviseerd via Amersfoort om te rijden.**

Passengers are advised to travel via Amersfoort.

### **23.6.1** *Let's try it*

Turn the following sentences into the passive voice and consider the better option, the active or the passive sentence:

- 1 Je mag in de bioscoop niet roken.
- 2 Men at vroeger veel meer spek dan nu.
- 3 De politie heeft de inbreker op heterdaad betrapt.
- 4 Mijn moeder opereert vandaag de minister-president.
- 5 In Frankrijk eten ze veel kaas.
- 6 Vorig weekend heb ik een pan erwtensoep gemaakt.

# *Idiomatic usages of some common verbs*

## **24.1 Aspectual meanings of some verbs**

### **24.1.1 Gaan**

Gaan is used for the beginning of an action:

<b>Hij gaat zitten.</b>	He sits down.
<b>Gaat u maar zitten.</b>	Please sit down.
<b>De poes ging liggen.</b>	The cat lay down.
<b>Wat gingen jullie doen?</b>	What did you (decide to) do?

### **24.1.2 Blijven**

To continue to do an action:

<b>De baby bleef huilen.</b>	The baby didn't stop crying.
<b>Het orkest stopte, maar hij bleef zingen.</b>	The orchestra stopped, but he continued to sing.
<b>Ik krijg het niet voor elkaar, maar ik blijf het proberen.</b>	I can't get it done, but I'll keep trying.
<b>Blijft u rustig zitten: de dokter komt zo bij u.</b>	Stay seated, the doctor will be right with you.