The Passive (for Upper Intermediate & Advanced students)
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In English the passive is much more used than in Spanish: when the subject is **unknown** (*they*/*someone* told me), or **unimportant/obvious**, i.e. when it does not give us relevant information (*the police* arrested me), and also when we wish to **highlight** one of the objects of a sentence in the active, for instance, from (active) S*omeone gave **me** a trip to Madagascar!* we can get two different sentences in the passive: *I was given a trip…* or *A trip… was given to me*, and in English the first one, I was given…, is usually the chosen option.

> *I was told you were away on a holiday* (Sb told me you were away on a holiday)
> *I was arrested for criminal damage* (The police arrested me for criminal damage)
> *I was given a trip to Madagascar in my birthday!!* (Sb gave me a trip to Madagascar)

The problem for Spanish speakers happens when they try to translate from Spanish. In Spanish, the IO (indirect object) in the active sentence can **never** be the subject of the passive! In English, the DO (Direct Object) of the active can also be the subject of the sentence in the passive, but there is a tendency to favor the IO because IO's tend to be people and DO are often objects, and people tend to be considered more important than objects! Confused? Consider these examples:

> *Fantastic oranges are produced in Valencia* (passive) - (active) People produce fantastic oranges in Valencia (DO as subject in the passive)
> *I was given a trip to Madagascar!* (passive) - (active) Someone gave me (IO) a trip to Madagascar (DO)
> Notice that if we use the DO as subject of the sentence in the passive our focus changes: A trip to Madagascar was given to me!!

So… **Avoid literal translation!** and use **functional translation: who/what** is important here? Also, remember that a verb in the passive necessarily consists of the verb "to be" as an auxiliary followed by the past participle of the main verb, and that this auxiliary is always in the same tense the main verb would be in the active: They gave me (*gave* = past simple; "to be" in the past simple is *was*/*were* + "give" in the past participle is *given* > I was given).

Consider the following sentences and their translation...
1. Tuvieron que demoler el edificio
   The building had to be demolished
2. Les detuvieron dos días después
   They were arrested two days later
3. Me dijeron que te habías casado con Juan
   I was told you had married John / got married to John
4. Nos regalaron un portátil
   We were given a laptop
5. La leche debería guardarse en la nevera
   Milk should be kept in the fridge
6. Ya han encontrado a alguien para el puesto
   The vacancy has already been filled
7. Por suerte, en la reunión no hablaron de eso
   Fortunately/Luckily, nothing was said about that at the meeting
8. No nos lo dijeron
   We were not told (about it)
9. Se discutirán las propuestas en nuestra próxima reunión
   The proposals will be discussed at our next meeting
10. En esta región se produce un vino buenísimo
    Excellent wine is produced in this region

Think about this: how do we translate impersonal-"se" sentences in Spanish into English?

¿Cómo se dice "esto"? = *How do you say "this"?*
Se nos dijo que debíamos apagar los móviles (impersonal "you") = *We were told we had to switch off our mobile phones / cell phones (passive).*