

The Gerundive with *sum* (Passive Periphrastic)

Latin has two verb constructions called *periphrastic conjugations*. These constructions employ the two future participles, the future active participle and the gerundive.

1. The Active Periphrastic Conjugation is formed by using the future active participle, modifying the Nominative Subject, followed by the necessary form of the verb *sum*; it expresses the *intention* of the Nominative Subject:

Caesar oppidum hostium *oppugnaturus est*.

Caesar *is about to attack* the enemies' town.

Caesar *intends to attack* the enemies' town.

Caesar oppidum hostium *oppugnaturus erat*.

Caesar *was about to attack* the enemies' town.

Caesar *intended to attack* the enemies' town.

2. The Passive Periphrastic Conjugation is formed by using the gerundive, modifying the Nominative Subject, followed by the necessary form of *sum*;

The Passive Periphrastic is the *strongest expression* in the Latin language; it expresses *obligation* or *necessity*, and is associated with the helping verbs “must,” “ought to,” and “needs.”

Cato the Elder, a Roman senator, is quoted as saying to the senate, near the end of the Third Punic War,

Karthago delenda est.

Carthage must be destroyed.

Carthage *has to be destroyed*.

Carthage *should be destroyed*.

Carthage *needs to be destroyed*.

Actually, the historical account is written in Indirect Statement:

Cato locutus est Karthaginem *delendam esse*.

Cato said that Carthage *had to be destroyed*.

The periphrastic conjugations, in fact, can be used in the indicative, the infinitive, or the subjunctive moods, as required by the context.

The Dative of Agent

Normally, when a verb is passive, its *agent*—the noun “by whom” its action is done—is expressed in the Ablative Case, with the preposition *ab/a*.

So strong and set apart is the Passive Periphrastic, however, that its agent is expressed in a different way; a Dative Case noun serves as the agent. This function of the dative is called the Dative of Agent with the Passive Periphrastic.

Muri *nobis* aedificandi sunt.

Walls must be built *by us*.

Muri nobis aedificandi erunt.

Walls will have to be built *by us*.

It is idiomatically correct, when a passive periphrastic has its agent expressed, to invert the construction and translate it as an active:

We must build walls.

We will have to build walls.