In early February 2013, the tallest building in the EU will be open to the public. This structure was originally known as London Bridge Tower, but became the Shard after critics claimed it looked like “a shard of glass”.

The Shard is designed in the year 2000 by an Italian architect called Renzo Piano, whose work also includes the Pompidou Centre in Paris and the Lloyds building in London. He is said to have been inspired by church spires across the city of London. In 1998, a property developer called Irvine Sellar purchased a site near London Bridge in the London borough of Southwark, and later met with Renzo Piano in a restaurant in Berlin to discuss the redevelopment of the area. It has been reported that Mr Piano at first rejected the idea of designing a tall building, as he believed they were “statements of arrogance”; however, he persuaded to participate in the project and began drafting a design of the Shard on the back of a menu.

The Shard is designed around a very strong concrete centre, which contains key building services such as escape routes and 44 lifts. To ensure that people can move around the building efficiently, the offices will be serviced by double-decker lifts and, in case of emergencies, there are also three sets of stairs. The structure is designed to move as much as 20 inches if necessary, so that the centre of the building can withstand forces such as high winds and earthquakes. In total, 11,000 glass panels have been used and the glass exterior is 56,000 square metres, which is equivalent to eight football pitches. An interesting fact is that the Shard was built using approximately 95% recycled materials.

When it opens in February, past and present icons of Britain’s capital city display in illustrated form throughout the entrance lobby. Visitors will be able to access viewing spaces on levels 68 to 72 of the skyscraper. The public takes to the 68th floor in lifts that travel at approximately six metres a second, listening to music composed by the London Symphony Orchestra. The developers claim that guests will be able to see for 64 km on a clear day, taking in the capital’s famous landmarks and far beyond. Information about more than 200 London attractions will be accessible via digital telescopes called ‘tell:scopes’, which guests will be able to use to see both day and night views of the city. It is expected that 1 million people will visit the Shard per year, and it will also be possible to stay at the 200-room hotel, go to the spa, or eat at a variety of restaurants which locate in the Shard.
Lesson objective: This activity is intended for an Intermediate or Upper Intermediate level class, and it can be adapted for higher/lower level learners (see below). Based on the theme of the Shard opening to the public in London in February 2013, this lesson focuses on the passive voice, first by checking students’ knowledge of the form and function of the passive, and then by applying it in context. In addition, this activity can be used to develop learners’ reading skills (reading for gist and reading to understand the main ideas).

Teacher’s Notes

1. Introduce two newspaper headlines to the class by writing them on the board; one should be an example of passive voice and the other active voice, for example The Shard unveiled in London (passive voice) / London city unveils the Shard (active voice). To concept check, ask the class to identify which headline uses the passive voice; you may need to point out that part of the grammatical form (to be) has been omitted as this is a common style in headlines. Brainstorm the uses of the passive voice with the class e.g. when the action is more important than the agent.

2. Tell the class that they are to guess which of the following buildings is which height. Write up the information in random order on the board (the information below is not in random order) and give pairs 2-3 mins to decide on their answers. This activity is designed to help learners understand the main theme of the reading. Variation: with higher level learners the height figures can be left blank and the students asked to predict the missing information in order to generate more discussion; this could also be done as a guessing game, with the winning pair/team being those who made the closest predictions. Extension: students could do a quick webquest to find out why some people might argue that the Eiffel Tower is in fact taller than the Shard. (Answer: with mast it measures 324m.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building</th>
<th>Height</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St Paul’s Cathedral</td>
<td>111 metres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empire State Building</td>
<td>443 metres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eiffel Tower</td>
<td>300 metres (without mast)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Shard</td>
<td>310 metres</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Hand out the worksheet and ask students to read through the text quickly to match the paragraph headings to the paragraphs. This is task number 1 on the worksheet. (The correct order is: New building, new name; History; Construction; For the public.)

4. Passive practice task 2: Students read the first two paragraphs again in more detail, and decide which options are correct. Students who finish early could decide what aspect of passive grammar was being tested in each item: form (eg use of past participle; conjugation of auxiliary to be) or function (eg action more important than agent).

5. Check students’ understanding of the first two paragraphs. For higher level students, ask them to work with their partner and underline the main facts of the two paragraphs, then they can make questions based on these to check that another pair of students understands the main points. For lower level students, the teacher could ask/display the following questions:
   1. When will the Shard open to the public?
   2. Why is the building famous in the EU?
   3. Why is it called the Shard?
   4. Who was it designed by?
   5. Why didn’t the architect originally want to design a tall building?

6. The passive practice task 3 (forming the passive in different tenses, and deciding if a passive or active voice is required) can be done in a variety of ways. The suggestion for an Upper-Intermediate class is to divide students into two groups and allocate group A to paragraph 3, and group B to paragraph 4. Now pair students together within their groups and give them 5-10 minutes to work on their allocated task. At this point, students can look up the meaning of some of the unknown vocabulary in order to understand the main points of the paragraph. Tell students before they start that they should be prepared to explain the content of the paragraph and their choice of answers.
7. Put two pairs together, one from each half (a group A pair + a group B pair) to form a four. In these fours, the students should explain the content of their paragraph, and explain why they chose their answers for the passive gap fill. If they believe any mistakes have been made, the students should discuss these together in their small groups and give reasons to support their views. Give feedback as a whole class.

8. Give out a selection of headlines taken from a current newspaper and ask students in pairs/small groups to invent the news story. Tell them that they should include the passive voice as appropriate. **Variation:** As an extra challenge, students could also try to include 3-5 of the unknown words taken from the Shard story (see step 6).

**Variation (Lower level)** – Paragraphs 3 and 4 could be read aloud by the teacher, and students fill in the gaps with the correct form of the passive that they hear. Alternatively, this could be done in pairs, with one student reading one complete paragraph, and the other filling in the gaps. Give feedback as a whole class.

**Gap fill answers for teachers: the Shard – reading and passive voice practice**

**New building, new name**
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**History**
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**For the Public**
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