

Easy to be done

This Kibbitzer is based on an essay by a Japanese-speaking postgraduate student of Linguistics:

Original	Revision
Each step is easy to be carried out.	Each step is easy to carry out.
	Each step can be carried out easily

The 'Passive Error' on the left is at first sight puzzling since it is made by a student whose mother tongue, as she tells me, does not allow such a structure. A moment's reflexion, however, shows how it is possible to explain it in terms of English alone, in which the MEANING of the complement 'is easy' is close to that of the modal 'can', though the contexts of the complement and of the modal are very different. The revisions above show how the original may be rewritten without, and with, the Passive.

Exercise

The following sentences are based on ones found in the corpus. On the left is a version using an adjective: on the right a version using the modal verb *can*. Complete one version or the other by filling in the gaps (one word per gap).

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| 1. The parachute is easy to remove | The parachute can be _____ easily. |
| 2. The plants are _____ to _____. | The plants can be propagated easily. |
| 3. Future inflation is _____ to predict. | Future inflation can be predicted only with difficulty |
| 4. Low temperature plasmas are relatively cheap to manufacture. | Low temperature plasmas _____ be _____ relatively _____. |
| 5. Houses from Colorado to Maine are _____ to _____ and easy to _____. | Houses from Colorado to Maine can be bought cheaply and can be let easily. |
| 6. This is a theory that is difficult to verify. | This is a theory that can _____ verified only _____. |

[Check](#) your answers