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ACTIVE AND PASSIVE VOICE

Active voice


A feature of sentences in which the subject performs the action of the verb and the direct object is the goal or the recipient.

Eg: *The mechanic fixed the car.*



■ In the Active voice, the subject performs the action.

For example:
Joseph draws a picture.



■ Joseph is the subject and he is doing something (drawing).

In most English sentences with an action verb, the subject performs the action denoted by the [verb](#).

These examples show that the [subject](#) is doing the verb's action.

The man must have eaten five hamburgers

The **man** (subject) is doing the **eating** (verb).

Marilyn mailed the letter.

Marilyn (subject) is doing the **mailing** (verb).

Colorful parrots live in the rainforests.

Parrots (subject) are doing the **living** (verb).

Because the subject does or "acts upon" the verb in such sentences, the sentences are said to be in the **active voice**.

Passive voice



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A feature of sentences in which the object or goal of the action functions as the sentence subject and the main verb phrase includes the verb *to be* and the past participle:

Eg: *The car was fixed by the mechanic.*

Passive Voice

Passive voice is used when the subject is the recipient of the action.

Example:

The ball was thrown by Lebron.
The basket was shot by Lebron.
The score was made by Lebron.

Passive Voice

Books are read by Nick every day.
subject verb object

English: learn, read, enjoy

One can change the normal word order of many active sentences (those with a [direct object](#)) so that the subject is no longer active, but is, instead, being acted upon by the verb - or passive.

Note in these examples how the subject-verb relationship has changed.

Five hamburgers must have been eaten by the man.

Hamburgers (subject) *are being eaten* (verb).

The letter was mailed by Marilyn.

The **letter** (subject) *was being mailed* (verb).

Because the subject is being "acted upon" (or is passive), such sentences are said to be in the **passive voice**.

NOTE: Colorful parrots live in the rainforests cannot be changed to passive voice because the sentence does not have a direct object.

To change a sentence from active to passive voice, do the following:

1. Move the active sentence's direct object into the sentence's subject slot



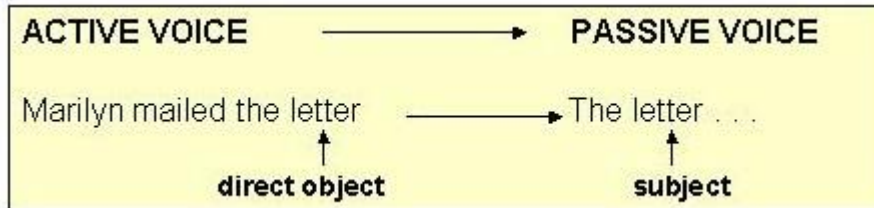
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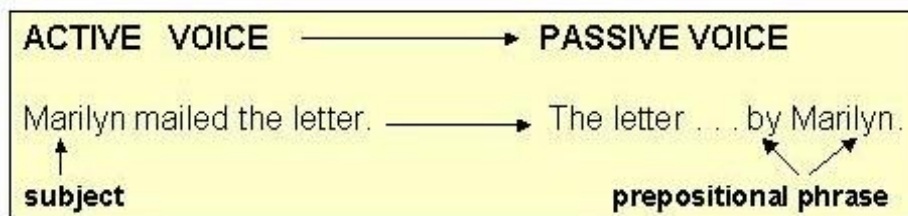


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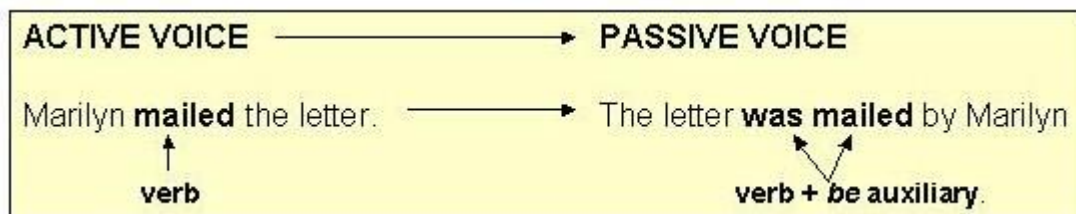
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2. Place the active sentence's subject into a phrase beginning with the [preposition](#) by



3. Add a form of the [auxiliary verb](#) be to the main verb and change the main verb's form



Because passive voice sentences necessarily add words and change the normal **doer-action-receiver of action** direction, they may make the reader work harder to understand the intended meaning.

As the examples below illustrate, a sentence in active voice flows more smoothly and is easier to understand than the same sentence in passive voice.



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ACTIVE VOICE

At each concert, the soprano sang at least one tune from a well-known opera.

↑ ↑ ↑
doer of action action receiver of action

PASSIVE VOICE

At each concert, at least one tune from a well-known opera was sung by the soprano.

↑ ↑ ↑
receiver of action action doer of action

ACTIVE VOICE

Asbestos abatement teams will remove large chunks of asbestos-laden material from the hallways on the second and third floors.

↑ ↑ ↑
doer of action action receiver of action

PASSIVE VOICE

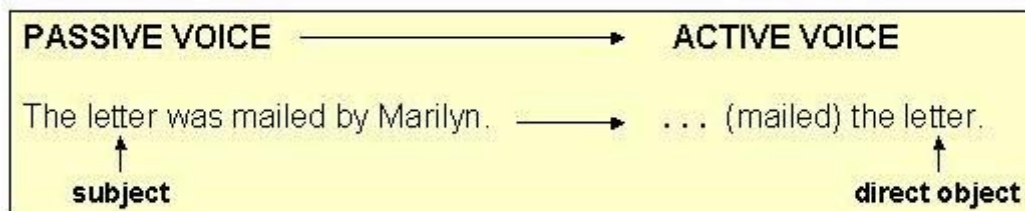
Large chunks of asbestos-laden material will be removed from the hallways on the second and third floors by asbestos abatement teams.

↑ ↑ ↑
receiver of action action doer of action

It is generally preferable to use the ACTIVE voice.

To change a passive voice sentence into an active voice sentence, simply reverse the steps shown above.

1. Move the passive sentence's subject into the active sentence's direct object slot



2. Remove the auxiliary verb **be** from the main verb and change main verb's form if needed



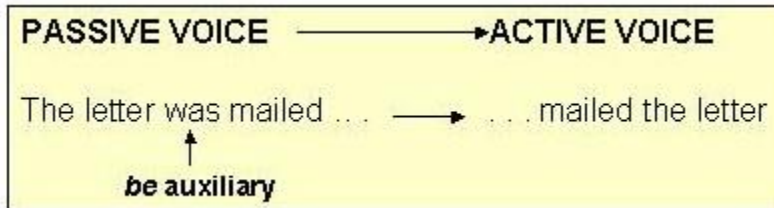
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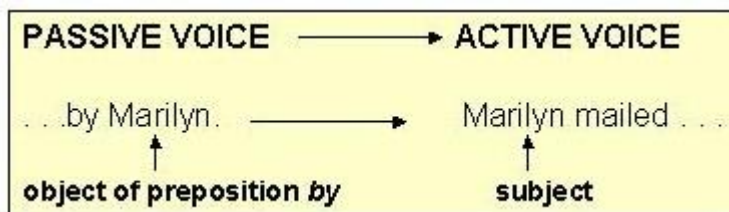


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3. Place the passive sentence's object of the preposition **by** into the subject slot.



Because it is more direct, most writers prefer to use the active voice whenever possible.

The passive voice may be a better choice, however, when

- the doer of the action is unknown, unwanted, or unneeded in the sentence

Examples

The ballots have been counted.

Sometimes our efforts are not fully appreciated.

- the writer wishes to emphasize the action of the sentence rather than the doer of the action

Examples

The high-jump record was finally broken last Saturday.

A suspect was questioned for sixteen hours by the police.

A wrap up session



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Difference between Active and Passive Voice

ACTIVE VOICE and PASSIVE VOICE

<p>The active voice of a verb tells us that someone (or something) does the action in a sentence.</p> <p>James watered the flowers.</p>		<p>The passive voice of a verb tells us that someone (or something) has an action done to them.</p> <p>The flowers were watered by James.</p>
<p>Sarah finished the homework.</p>		<p>The homework was finished by Sarah.</p>
<p>The puppy chewed the shoe.</p>		<p>The shoe was chewed by the puppy.</p>

 Can you change this sentence so the verb is in the **passive voice**?
The horse ate the carrot.

Can you change this sentence so the verb is in the **active voice**?
The book was written by Sam.

Activity time:

Choose 1 image from each set of the pages given below and combine to form a new sentence. The team which frames maximum number of sentences will be decided as the winner.



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The window was broken.



The snake was cut.



The man was eaten.



The man was stabbed.



The man was punched.



The man was kicked.



The boy was kissed.



The man was scratched.



The man was killed.



The boy was pushed



The doctor was bitten.



The boy was licked.





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www.mas-english.com



The boy was stepped on.



The boy was tackled.



The house was knocked over.



The man was chased.



The car was blown up.



The car was smashed.



The man was robbed.



The criminal was caught.



The money was stolen.



His finger was burnt.



The man was shot.



The man was grabbed.



The man was pinched.



The boy was thrown.



The man was tripped.





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Exercises for review:

I. Complete the following sentences using appropriate active or passive verb forms. Choose your answers from the given options.

1. The problem to the children. (explained / was explained)
2. Those pyramids around 400 AD. (built / were built)
3. All the trouble by your mother. (has caused / was caused)
4. The visitors (were shown / have shown) a collection of old manuscripts.
5. I him ten thousand pounds last year. (lend / lent / was lent)
6. She of spiders. (frightened / is frightened)
7. That picture by my grandmother. (painted / was painted)
8. I by his attitude. (shocked / have shocked / was shocked)
9. Excuse the mess. The house (is painting / is being painted / has painted)
10. I knew why I (had chosen / had been chosen)

II. Complete the following sentences using an active or passive verb form.

Hints:- We use the active voice when the subject is the doer of the action.

We use the passive voice when something is done to the subject.

1. Most things plastic these days.

- a) made of b) are made of c) Either could be used here

2. My mother wine from strawberries.

- a) makes b) is made

3. The house

- a) is built b) is being built c) Either could be used here



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4. This bag of leather.

- a) is made b) make

5. It disappeared. I can't see it now.

- a) has b) has been c) Either could be used here

6. Their house last week.

- a) sold b) was sold c) is sold

7. Do you think that the work by Friday?

- a) is completed b) will be completed

8. These tablets with food.

- a) need to take b) need to be taken

9. The postman this letter in the morning.

- a) delivered b) was delivered

10. You the money last week.

- a) should send b) should have sent c) send

III. Complete the following sentences using appropriate active or passive verb forms. Choose your answers from the given options.

1. The problem to the children. (explained / was explained)
2. Those pyramids around 400 AD. (built / were built)
3. All the trouble by your mother. (has caused / was caused)
4. The visitors (were shown / have shown) a collection of old manuscripts.
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7. That picture by my grandmother. (painted / was painted)
8. I by his attitude. (shocked / have shocked / was shocked)
9. Excuse the mess. The house (is painting / is being painted / has painted)
10. I knew why I (had chosen / had been chosen)

IV. Test your knowledge of active and passive voice with this grammar exercise. Each sentence given below is in the active voice. Change it into passive voice.

1. He sings a song.

.....

2. The boy killed the spider.

.....

3. Help him.

.....

4. Farmers sow maize in the rainy season.

.....

5. Are you writing a letter?

.....

6. The workers were digging a canal.

.....

7. I will finish the job by the end of this week.

.....

8. Have you finished your job?

.....

9. They have informed him of his mother's death.



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.....
10. They took all the necessary precautions.
.....

EXERCISE -V

Change the sentences into passive form :

1. We should thoroughly clean the ends of the metal articles.

2. I applied a flux to the heated ends.

3. The robot painted five cars an hour.

4. The teacher taught the students English.

5. They will start production on the new type of reactor soon.

6. That country does not produce any heavy industrial machinery.

7. A skilled operator can carry out many operations on a lathe.

8. Dispatch the letter.

9. Who gave you this pen?

10. You must take care not to damage the machinery.

11. The crew found the meteorological information to be very useful.

12. The management will require data on capacity utilization and passenger and cargo transport.

13. At welding temperature, the welder's apply a strong pressure to the metal sheets.

14. We can use coal to produce detergents, explosives and paints.



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15. _____
Multinational companies make huge investments in oil - rich countries.

16. Indian Airlines has introduced the automatic printing of tickets in major cities.

17. A very small quantity of nuclear fuel can produce enormous amount of energy.

18. Handle these machines with great care.

19. He removes the scale which is deposited in the water tubes.

20. The workers are repairing the bridge.

21. People have seen gold mines in the forest.

22. They have installed a new computer in the accounts section.

23. We clamp the two metals together.

24. Will the postman deliver the letters?

25. We will finish the work by six o' clock.

26. The company employed many workers this year.

27. We use the community type hybrid solar cooker for cooking a large quantity of food.

28. We can measure atmospheric pressure, using a barometer.

29. We can prepare metallic sodium by the electrolysis of fused sodium chloride.

30. We call these support bearings.



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31. We can generate heat for welding in several ways.

32. He has taken the photograph.

33. Many countries use the India Mark II in preference to pumps made in other countries.

34. They kept the computers in an air - conditioned room.

35. The operator selects the appropriate gear for the job.

36. We can alter the characteristics of steel in various ways.

37. The mechanics repair fifteen cars every week.

38. The automobile companies produce hundreds of cars and incur heavy loss every year.

39. The headstock incorporates the driving and the gear mechanisms.

40. We should not subject any heated metal to sudden cooling.

41. The library will acquire a new stock of books this month.

42. Someone broke into the house last night and stole jewels worth Rs one lakh.

EXERCISE - VI

Change the sentences into active voice :

1. My watch has been stolen.

2. The business magnet was murdered last night.



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3. All the questions must be answered by you.

4. The criminal was arrested by a police.

5. The crops have been ruined by the rain.

6. A present was bought for her by him.

7. This picture has been painted by my sister.

8. The incident had been told to Sengupta by him.

9. Let the doors be shut.

10. The letters were being delivered by the postman.

11. Shakunthala was written by Kalidasa.

12. The telegraph wires have been cut.

13. The steam engine was invented by James Watt.

14. Honey is made by bees.

15. The exhibition was opened by the Prime Minister.

16. Stones should not be thrown by those who live in glass houses.

17. The letter was written by the clerk.

18. Machine tools were purchased by him.

19. Normally a vee - shaped weld is preferred by the welders.

20. An electric current is passed across the electrodes.



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21. Alternative sources of energy have to be used by us to tide over the energy crisis

22. The prices of essential commodities must be brought down by the authorities.

23. They are often taken to interesting places by their friends.

24. Precautions should be taken by everyone while entering the chemistry lab.

25. The first prize was won by our team.

26. The equipment for the practical examinations was being arranged by the technician.

EXERCISE - VII

Convert the following into Impersonal Passive voice :

1. The student pipettes out twenty millilitre of concentrated sulphuric acid from the bottle.

2. The English Electric Company of India has recently introduced two residual current devices.

3. He operates the electric motor carefully.

4. I prepared copper sulphate from copper oxide.

5. I placed the beaker on a gauze on a tripod.

6. We should use an oxy - acetylene torch for this.

7. We can cast this type of metal into very complicated shapes.

8. The industrial revolution did not cause unemployment.

9. The existing uranium reserves in the country can support a pressurized heavy water reactor programme.



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10. We can use a thin grease as a lubricant in rolling bearings.

11. They have successfully installed the new machinery in the factory. *[AU, May/June – 2006]*

12. A skilled operator can carry out many operations on a CNC machine

13. China produces thousands of electronic devices every year. *[AU, Jan – 2006]*

14. Life – science companies employ various methods to control the global bio – industrial markets.

15. Avoid cellphone while driving. *[AU, May / June – 2007]*

16. Save enough money for the future. *[AU, May / June – 2007]*

17. Place the beaker on the desk. *[AU, May / June – 2007]*

18. Apply science to solve human problems. *[AU, May / June – 2007]*

Impersonal passive Voice

Passive voice is used when the focus is on the action. It is not important or not known, however, who or what is performing the action.

Example: My bike was stolen.

In the example above, the focus is on the fact that my bike was stolen. I do not know, however, who did it.



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1. Personal Passive

- **Personal Passive** simply means that the object of the active sentence becomes the subject of the passive sentence. So every verb that needs an object (transitive verb) can form a personal passive.

Example: They build houses. – Houses are built.

- Verbs without an object (intransitive verb) normally cannot form a personal passive sentence (as there is no object that can become the subject of the passive sentence). If you want to use an intransitive verb in passive voice, you need an impersonal construction – therefore this passive is called *Impersonal Passive*.

Example: he says – it is said

When we put an **object** of an active sentence into passive, it becomes **subject** of the passive sentence.

- Active sentence → The professor gave **the students** the books.
- Passive sentence → **The students** were given the books.

We sometimes use a pronoun for *the students* or *the books* in its subject form (here: *they*).

- Active sentence → The professor gave **them** the books.
- Passive sentence → **They** were given the books.

We very often leave out the *by-agent* in the passive sentence (here: *by the professor*).

2. Impersonal Passive – *It is said ...*

Impersonal Passive is not as common in English as in some other languages (e.g. German, Latin). In English, *Impersonal Passive* is only possible with verbs of perception (e. g. say, think, know).

Example: They say that women live longer than men. – It is said that women live longer than men.

Although *Impersonal Passive* is possible here, *Personal Passive* is more common.



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Example: They say that women live longer than men. – Women are said to live longer than men.

The phrase **It is said ...** is an impersonal passive construction. We often use it in news.

- Passive sentence 1 → **It is said** that children are afraid of ghosts.
- Passive sentence 2 → Children are said to be afraid of ghosts.

The correct active sentence would be:

- Active sentence → People say that children are afraid of ghosts.

Convert the following into Impersonal Passive voice :

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3. He operates the electric motor carefully.
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6. We should use an oxy - acetylene torch for this.
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10. We can use a thin grease as a lubricant in rolling bearings.
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