

Exercise 1: Passive to Active Rewrite

The Challenge: Rewrite the following sentences from passive to active voice. Focus on identifying the doer of the action and making it the subject of the sentence.

1. **Passive:** The user manual was updated by the technical writer to include new screenshots.
2. **Passive:** All system errors are logged and stored in a database.
3. **Passive:** The prototype was assembled and tested by the engineering team.
4. **Passive:** New features will be implemented with the next software release.
5. **Passive:** The bug was fixed by the developer within 24 hours.

Solved Exercises:

1. **Active:** The technical writer updated the user manual to include new screenshots.
2. **Active:** The system logs and stores all errors in a database. (Note: The "doer" isn't explicitly stated in the original sentence, but a logical subject like "the system" can be inferred.)
3. **Active:** The engineering team assembled and tested the prototype.
4. **Active:** The next software release will implement new features. (Note: In this case, the "doer" is the release itself, which can be an effective and clear subject.)
5. **Active:** The developer fixed the bug within 24 hours.

Exercise 2: Strategic Voice Choice

The Challenge: Read the following pairs of sentences. Choose the best sentence for a technical document and explain why.

1. **a.** The circuit board was designed to be energy efficient. **b.** Our team designed the circuit board to be energy efficient.
2. **a.** The sample was heated to 100°C for three minutes, as outlined in the procedure. **b.** We heated the sample to 100°C for three minutes, as outlined in the procedure.
3. **a.** A mistake was made in the project timeline, which will cause a delay. **b.** We made a mistake in the project timeline, which will cause a delay.

Solved Exercises:

1. **Best Choice: b.** "Our team designed the circuit board to be energy efficient." **Reason:** The active voice is more direct and concise. It clearly states **who** performed the action, which is important for communicating team responsibilities and achievements in a report.
2. **Best Choice: a.** "The sample was heated to 100°C for three minutes, as outlined in the procedure." **Reason:** The passive voice is a better choice here because it emphasizes the **process** or action ("was heated") rather than the person who performed it. This is standard practice in scientific and procedural writing, where the focus is on the steps and results, not the individual.
3. **Best Choice: a.** "A mistake was made in the project timeline, which will cause a delay." **Reason:** The passive voice is often used for diplomacy or to avoid assigning blame. This version focuses on the **error itself** and its consequence, which is a more

professional and tactful way to communicate a problem than explicitly stating "we made a mistake."

Exercise 3: Fill in the Blank

The Challenge: Fill in the blank with the correct form of the verb to create either a clear active or passive sentence, depending on the context.

1. The technical report _____ by the quality assurance team before it was released. (review)
2. The product manager _____ the new features for the next sprint. (prioritize)
3. The operating instructions _____ in the product box. (include)
4. The system administrator _____ the software update last night. (install)

Solved Exercises:

1. The technical report **was reviewed** by the quality assurance team before it was released. (Passive - The focus is on the report and the action performed on it.)
2. The product manager **prioritized** the new features for the next sprint. (Active - The focus is on the product manager and their action.)
3. The operating instructions **are included** in the product box. (Passive - The doer is less important than the fact that the instructions are present.)
4. The system administrator **installed** the software update last night. (Active - Clear and direct, stating who did the action.)

Exercises in paragraph form are a great way to test a more holistic understanding of active and passive voice in a technical communication context. They force students to consider not just individual sentences but also the flow, tone, and overall clarity of a complete text.

Here are some exercises in paragraph form with solutions.

Exercise 1: Passive-to-Active Paragraph Rewrite

The Challenge: The following paragraph is from a technical report. It relies heavily on the passive voice, which makes it sound formal and indirect. Rewrite the paragraph in the **active voice** to make it more concise and direct.

Original Paragraph (Passive Voice):

The project timeline was established by the project manager. All tasks were assigned to the team members, and the deadlines were communicated to them. The initial design documents were reviewed by the engineers, and feedback was provided. A prototype was then constructed by the development team. The user interface was tested for usability, and the results were documented.

Solved Paragraph (Active Voice):

The **project manager** established the project timeline. **They** assigned all tasks to the team members and communicated the deadlines. The **engineers** reviewed the initial design

documents and provided feedback. The **development team** then constructed a prototype. **They** tested the user interface for usability and documented the results.

Exercise 2: Strategic Voice Choice in a Paragraph

The Challenge: The following paragraph describes a scientific process. Some sentences are in the active voice, and some are in the passive. Read the paragraph and decide which voice is **most appropriate** for each sentence, and then explain why.

Original Paragraph:

The chemical compound was prepared in a controlled environment. A new filtration method was developed by our team to remove impurities. We then introduced the compound into the test sample. The sample's temperature was carefully monitored throughout the experiment to ensure accuracy. The final data was analyzed and stored for future reference.

Solved Paragraph & Rationale:

- "The chemical compound **was prepared** in a controlled environment."
 - **Appropriate Voice:** Passive.
 - **Reason:** This sentence appropriately uses the passive voice because the focus is on the **compound itself** and the process it underwent, not on who prepared it. This is standard for formal, scientific writing where the procedure is more important than the person performing it.
- "A new filtration method **was developed** by our team to remove impurities."
 - **Appropriate Voice:** Passive.
 - **Reason:** While the "doer" is mentioned ("by our team"), the passive voice places emphasis on the **new method**, which is likely the most significant element of this sentence in a technical context.
- "**We** then introduced the compound into the test sample."
 - **Appropriate Voice:** Active.
 - **Reason:** The active voice ("we introduced") is a clear and direct way to show a deliberate action taken by the researchers. It's concise and works well to describe a specific step in the process.
- "The sample's temperature **was carefully monitored** throughout the experiment to ensure accuracy."
 - **Appropriate Voice:** Passive.
 - **Reason:** Similar to the first sentence, the passive voice emphasizes the **monitoring process** and the object being monitored (the temperature), rather than who was doing the monitoring. This keeps the focus on the scientific procedure.
- "The final data **was analyzed** and stored for future reference."
 - **Appropriate Voice:** Passive.
 - **Reason:** This construction, which focuses on the data and the actions performed on it, is highly common and acceptable in technical and scientific reports. It emphasizes the **results and their treatment** rather than the person who analysed them.

Exercise 3: Identifying and Correcting Voice Issues

The Challenge: The following paragraph has inconsistent and sometimes awkward voice usage. Identify the sentences that should be in the active voice and rewrite them for clarity and impact.

Original Paragraph:

During the software development life cycle, the requirements **are gathered** from stakeholders. The project team then **designs** the system architecture. After this, the code **is written**, and the unit tests **are conducted**. The entire application **is reviewed** by the quality assurance department. Finally, a complete technical manual **is drafted** for the end-users.

Solved Paragraph:

During the software development life cycle, the project team **gathers** the requirements from stakeholders. The **team** then **designs** the system architecture. After this, **developers write** the code and **conduct** the unit tests. The **quality assurance department reviews** the entire application. Finally, a **technical writer drafts** a complete technical manual for the end-users.

SOLVED EXERCISE IN MCQ PATTERN

Exercise 1: Passive to Active Transformation

Question 1

Passive: The user manual was updated by the technical writer to include new screenshots.

Which of the following sentences correctly transforms the passive voice sentence above into the active voice?

A. The new screenshots were included in the user manual by the technical writer. B. The technical writer updated the user manual to include new screenshots. C. The technical writer, who updated the user manual, included new screenshots. D. Updated by the technical writer, the user manual now includes new screenshots.

Solution:

B. The technical writer updated the user manual to include new screenshots. This option correctly identifies the **doer** of the action (the technical writer) and makes them the **subject** of the sentence, which is the key principle of active voice.

Exercise 2: Strategic Voice Choice

Question 2

Context: You are writing a lab report where the focus is on the scientific procedure and results, not the person who performed the experiment.

Which sentence is the best choice for this context?

A. We heated the sample to 100°C for three minutes, as outlined in the procedure. B. The sample was heated to 100°C for three minutes, as outlined in the procedure. C. The procedure outlined that we heated the sample to 100°C for three minutes. D. Heating the sample to 100°C for three minutes was what we did.

Solution:

B. The sample was heated to 100°C for three minutes, as outlined in the procedure. This sentence uses the **passive voice**, which is standard practice in scientific and procedural writing. It emphasizes the **action** and the **object** (the sample) rather than the person who performed the action, which keeps the report's focus on the methodology.

Exercise 3: Identifying and Correcting Voice Issues

Question 3

Context: The following sentence contains a voice issue that makes it sound awkward and indirect.

Sentence: After the code is written, the unit tests are conducted.

Which of the following is the most direct and clear active-voice revision?

A. After the code is written, we conducted the unit tests. B. After writing the code, the unit tests are conducted. C. After writing the code, the developers conduct the unit tests. D. The unit tests are conducted after the code is written.

Solution:

C. After writing the code, the developers conduct the unit tests. This revision uses the **active voice** to clearly state the **doer** (the developers) of the action (conducting the unit tests), making the sentence more concise and direct. It also corrects the awkward mix of passive and active constructions present in some of the other options.

Exercise 4: Fill in the Blank (Active or Passive)

Question 4

Sentence: The final report _____ to the client by the project manager. (send)

Which verb form correctly completes the sentence to make it clear and grammatically correct?

A. will send B. was sending C. was sent D. has sent

Solution:

C. was sent. The sentence structure requires a **passive verb** because the subject, "the final report," is the recipient of the action, not the doer. The phrase "by the project manager" explicitly identifies the agent, which confirms that the passive voice is the correct choice here.

Exercise 5: Strategic Voice for Technical Reports

Question 5

Context: You are writing a project report for a stakeholder who needs to understand who is responsible for each part of the work.

Which of the following sentences is the most effective choice?

A. The system requirements were gathered and analyzed. B. Gathering and analyzing the system requirements was a crucial step. C. Our team gathered and analyzed the system requirements. D. System requirements were both gathered and then analyzed by our team.

Solution:

C. Our team gathered and analyzed the system requirements. The **active voice** is the best choice here because it clearly identifies the **doer** of the action ("Our team"). This is essential for a project report where accountability, responsibility, and team achievements are important for stakeholders.

Exercise 6: Identifying Redundancy in Passive Voice

Question 6

Context: The following sentence contains redundant wording due to its passive voice construction.

Sentence: The final design was approved by the committee at the last meeting.

Which of the following revisions is the most concise and effective active voice sentence?

A. The committee approved the final design at the last meeting. B. Approval was given to the final design by the committee at the last meeting. C. The final design, which was approved by the committee, was at the last meeting. D. The last meeting saw the approval of the final design by the committee.

Solution:

A. The committee approved the final design at the last meeting. This revision is the most concise and direct. It eliminates the need for the "was approved by" construction, making the sentence shorter and clearer. The active voice puts the emphasis on the **subject** (the committee) and its **action** (approved).

Exercise 7: Fill in the Blank (Active or Passive)

Question 7

Sentence: During the test, data _____ automatically and sent to the server. (collect)

Which verb form correctly completes the sentence?

A. is collecting B. collects C. is collected D. will collect

Solution:

C. is collected. The subject, "data," is the **receiver** of the action (it is being collected), not the doer. Therefore, the **passive voice** is required. The present tense "is collected" fits the context of a process happening during the test.

Exercise 8: Strategic Voice for Diplomacy

Question 8

Context: You are writing an incident report to your manager about a recent system failure. You want to describe the event professionally without assigning blame.

Which sentence is the best choice for this context?

A. We failed to detect the server overload in time. B. The server overload was not detected in time. C. The team failed to detect the server overload in time. D. Our failure to detect the server overload caused the issue.

Solution:

B. The server overload was not detected in time. The **passive voice** is often used for diplomacy or to avoid assigning blame, as mentioned in your original solved exercises. This sentence focuses on the **event** itself ("the server overload") and its consequence, which is a more professional and tactful way to communicate a problem in a formal report than explicitly stating "we failed."