

The Passive Voice

Passive voice means that the **subject** is a **recipient** of a **verb's action**. The **focus** is on the **action**, while the subject is **not known** or **less important**. Passive Voice is always constructed with a conjugated form of **to be** plus the verb's past participle.

Active or Passive voice

Tense is all about time references, a voice describes whether the grammatical subject of a clause performs or receives the action of the verb.

Active voice formula:

subject + verb(performed by subject) + **object**

Passive voice formula

subject + some form of to be + past participle + optional prepositional phrase

Chester **kicked** the ball.

Active voice

The ball **was kicked** by Chester.

Passive voice

The ball **was kicked**. (by Chester)

Passive voice (without prepositional phrase)

Functions of the passive voice

The passive voice is used to **show interest** in the person or object that experiences an action rather than the person or object that performs the action.

- The passive voice **is used** frequently. (= we are interested in the passive voice, not in who uses it.)

Sometimes we use the passive voice because **we don't know or do not want to express who** performed the action.

- My car **has been stolen**!

Another use of the passive voice is in academic writing to be **more formal**.

- This valve **has been designed** to minimize the risk of excessive pressure being delivered to the infant.

Form of Passive

Subject + finite form of to be + Past Participle (Example: A letter was written.)

When rewriting active sentences in passive voice, **note the following**:

- the object of the active sentence **becomes the subject** of the passive sentence
- the finite form of the verb is **changed** (to be + past participle)
- the subject of the active sentence **becomes the object** of the passive sentence (or is dropped)

Passive Sentences with Two Objects

Rewriting an active sentence with two objects in passive voice means that one of the two objects **becomes the subject**, the other one **remains an object**. Which object to transform into a subject depends on what you want to put the focus on.

	Subject	Verb	Object 1	Object 2
Active:	Rita	wrote	a letter	to me.
Passive:	A letter	was written	to me	by Rita.
Passive:	I	was written	a letter	by Rita.

As you can see in the examples, adding by Rita does not sound very elegant. That's why it is usually dropped.

Exercise - The Passive: Mixed Tenses

Change these sentences from active to passive:

<p>1. People speak Portuguese in Brazil. Portuguese is spoken in Brazil.</p> <p>2. The Government is planning a new road near my house. A new road is being planned by the government near my house.</p> <p>3. My grandfather built this house in 1943. This house was built by my grandfather in 1943.</p> <p>4. Picasso was painting Guernica at that time. Guernica was being painted by Picasso at that time.</p> <p>5. The cleaner has cleaned the office. The office was being cleaned by the cleaner.</p> <p>6. He had written three books before 1867. Three books had been written before 1867 (by him).</p> <p>7. John will tell you later. You will be told by John later.</p> <p>8. By this time tomorrow we will have signed the deal. The deal will have been signed by this time tomorrow.</p> <p>9. Somebody should do the work. The work should be done by someone.</p> <p>10. The traffic might have delayed Jimmy. Jimmy might have been delayed by traffic.</p>	<p>11. Everybody loves Mr Brown. Mr Brown is loved by everybody.</p> <p>12. They are building a new stadium near the station. A new stadium near the station is being made.</p> <p>13. The wolf ate the princess. The princess was eaten by the wolf.</p> <p>14. At six o'clock someone was telling a story. A story was being told at six o'clock (by someone).</p> <p>15. Somebody has drunk all the milk! All the milk has been drunk (by somebody).</p> <p>16. I had cleaned all the windows before the storm. The windows had been cleaned before the storm.</p> <p>17. A workman will repair the computer tomorrow. The computer will be repaired tomorrow (by a workman).</p> <p>18. By next year the students will have studied the passive. The passive will have been studied by next year.</p> <p>19. James might cook dinner. Dinner might have been cooked (by James).</p> <p>20. Somebody must have taken my wallet. My wallet must have been taken (by somebody).</p>
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