**VOICE**

**ACTIVE VOICE AND PASSIVE VOICE**

**INTRODUCTION**

In grammar, voice is a feature of verb. It tells whether the subject of verb acts or is acted upon. English has two voice: **active** and **passive.**

A verb is in the active voice when its subject is the doer or denote, of the action. For example, the verb is in active voice in the sentence ***Hari reads a book*** because the subject, Hari performs the action; reads.

A verb is in passive voice when its subject receives the action. For example, in the sentence ***the book was read by Hari.*** The subject, book, receives the action, was read.

Let us study the two voices in detail.

**ACTIVE VOICE**

A verb is in Active Voice when its form shows that the subject does something.

In sentences written in Active Voice, the subject performs the action expressed in the verb; i.e. the subject acts.

Examples:

* The **dog** bit the boy.
* **Pooja** will present her research at the conference.
* **Scientists** have conducted experiments to test the hypothesis.

In each example the subject of the sentence performs the action expressed in the verb.

**CONSTRUCTION OF THE ACTIVE VOICE**

The normal pattern is of a sentence in active voice is: Subject+Verb+Object(S+V+O)

Examples:

* The dog bit the boy.
* Pooja will present her research at the conference.
* Scientists have conducted experiments to test the hypothesis.

**PASSIVE VOICE**

In sentences written in ***Passive Voice***, the subject receives the action expressed in the verb; i.e. the subject is acted upon. The agent performing the action may appear in the phrase by the… or the phrase or may be omitted. The passive contains some form of the verb be: such as is, **was, were,** or **been**, plush the part participle of the verb. Only transitive verbs or verbs that take a direct object can be charged into passive voice.

**Examples:**

* The **boy** was bitten by the dog.
* **Research** will be presented by Pooja at the conference.
* **Experiments** have been conducted to test the hypothesis.

**CONSTRUCTION TO PASSIVE VOICE**

(Sub+Auxiliary Verb (be) +Main Verb (Past Participle)

**Examples:**

* The boywas bitten by the dog.
* Research will be presented by Pooja at the conference.
* Experiments have been conducted to test the hypothesis.

Use of the Passive Voice: we use the Passive Voice when:

1. We want to make the active object more important
2. We do not know the active subject.

**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)

**Usage:**

Most critics agree that for effective writing a writer must as a rule prefer the active voice and avoid passive voice. However, there are certain situations where passive voice may make for more effective writing than active voice.

Passive voice has to do with how important is the identity of the actor in relation to the recipient of the action. When the actor is focus of subject matter active voice should be used. But when the result or the recipient in a sentence is the focus of the sentence passive voice should be used.

**SYNTACTICAL CHANGES IN THE ACTIVE - PASSIVE CONVERSATION PROCESS**

1. **SIMPLE PRESENT TENSE**

Active voice: (Subject + V1 + Object)

I love my children

Passive voice: (Obj + helping verb (is/am/are) + past participle (V3) + by + object)

My children are loved by me

1. **PRESENT CONTINUOUS TENSE**

Active voice: Sub + helping verb (am/is/are) + verb + ing + object

Children are helping the poor.

Passive voice: Obj+ helping verb (am/is/are) + being + V3 + by + object

The poor are being helped by children.

1. **PRESENT PERFECT TENSE**

Active voice: Sub + helping verb (have/has) + V3 + object

Monu has invited all his friends.

Passive voice: Obj + helping verb (has/have + been) + V3 + by + object

All his friends have been invited by Monu.

1. **SIMPLE PAST TENSE**

Active voice: (Subject + V2 + Object)

They elected him president.

Passive voice: (Obj + helping verb (was/were) + past participle (V3) + by + object)

He was elected president by them.

1. **PAST CONTINUOUS TENSE**

Active voice: Sub + helping verb (was/were) + V1 + ing + object

The horses were drawing a cart.

Passive voice: Obj + helping verb (was/were) + being + V3 + by + object

A cart was being drawn by the horses.

1. **PAST PERFECT TENSE**

Active voice: Sub + helping verb (had) + V3 + object

Rani had never seen it before.

Passive voice: Obj + helping verb (had + been) + V3 + by + object

It had never been seen by Rani before.

1. **SIMPLE FUTURE TENSE**

Active voice: (Subject +will/shall + V1 + Object)

He will write a letter.

Passive voice: (Obj + helping verb (will/shall + be) + past participle (V3) + by + object)

A letter will be written by him.

1. **FUTURE PERFECT TENSE**

Active voice: (Subject +will/shall + have + V3 + Object)

They will have planted trees.

Passive voice: Objt + will have/shall have + been + V3 + by + Object

Trees will have been planted by them.

**Note:** The sentences of following tenses can’t be changed to Passive Voice:

1. Present perfect continuous or progressive tense.
2. Past perfect continuous or progressive tense.
3. Future perfect continuous or progressive tense
4. Future continuous or progressive tense.
5. Sentences having intransitive verbs**.** (**Transitive and Intransitive verbs:** Realize that many verbs can be both **transitive** and **intransitive**. An action verb with a direct object is ***transitive*** while an action verb with no direct object is **intransitive.** Some verbs, such as **arrive**, **go,** **lie,** **sneeze**, **sit**, and **die**, are always intransitive; it is impossible for a direct object to follow).

**PASSIVE SENTENCES WITH TWO OBJECTS**

**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 subject depends on what you want to focus upon in the sentence.

**Example:**

Rita wrote a letter to me. (AV)

A letter was written to me by Rita (PV)

I was written a letter by Rita. (PV)

**Note:** as you can see in the example, adding by Rita does not appear to add to the meaning of the sentence as the fact that a letter was written to me is the focus of the sentence. Since the agent here is not the focus it can be dropped.

**VERB WITH TWO OBJECTS**

Many verbs can be followed by two objects: an indirect object and a direct object. Examples of such verbs are: **give, send, show** and **lend.** When a verb has two objects, two structures are possible.

She told me a story. (Subject + verb + indirect object + direct object)  
She told a story to me. (Subject + verb + direct object +preposition + indirect object)  
He gave his sister a car. (Subject + verb + indirect object + direct object)  
He gave a car to his sister. (Subject + verb + direct object + preposition + indirect object)Both of these structures can be made passive.

**1. The indirect object as the subject of the passive verb**

**I** was told a story (by her).  
**His sister** was given a car (by him).

**2. The direct object as the subject of the passive verb**

A story was told to me (by her).  
A car was given to his sister.

Of these, the first structure (indirect object as subject of the passive verb) is probably the more common of the two.

**I** have just been sent a **new report**. (More common)  
**A new report** has just been sent **to me.** (Less common)  
You **were lent** two thousand pounds last year. (More common)  
Two thousand pounds **were lent** **to you** last year. (Less common)

* I gave him five rupees. (AV)

Five rupees were given to him by me. (PV)

He was given five rupees by me. (PV)

* She has told me the truth. (AV)

I was told the truth by her. (PV)

The truth was told to me by her. (PV)

**IMPERATIVE SENTENCE (COMMANDS AND REQUESTS)**

***(Let + object + be + past participle)***

***(Let + object + not + be + past participle)***

There is a special formula for changing an imperative sentence into passive voice. An imperative sentence in the passive voice has the following form: ***Let + object + be + past participle.*** When the active voice is in the negative, the passive voice takes the form: ***Let + object + not + be + past participle.*** Note that do is not used in the passive f*or*m.

* Please open the door. (AV)

Let the door be opened by you. (PV)

Hence the sentence in Active Voice has been changed into a sentence in Passive Voice. **“Let”** is used to convert the Active Voice sentence into a Passive Voice sentence.

* Do not mistake me. (AV)

Let me not be mistaken. (PV)

* Cut your nails. (AV)

Let your nails be cut. (PV)

**WITH MODAL VERBS**

The verbs **can**, **could**, **may**, **might**, and **must** are known as *Modal Verbs*, as per the following:

**Forming Passives with Modals**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Affirmative Form** | Object + may, must, can, could, ought to, should + be + verb3 |
| **Question Form** | Must, may, can, should, might + object + be + verb3 (past participle) |

Something must / can / should... be done by someone at sometime.  
  
Active: Our English teacher may give an exam today.  
Passive: An exam may be given by our English teacher today.  
  
Active: Thomas has written many books.  
Passive: Many books have been written by Thomas.  
  
Active: Do you have to pay the bill before leaving the restaurant?  
Passive: the bill has to be paid before leaving the restaurant?

You can take the book. (AV)

The book can be taken by you. (PV)

Everybody must obey the rules. (AV)

The rules must be obeyed by everybody. (PV)