

A sentence can be written in either active voice or passive voice without changing the meaning of it.

When the verb in a sentence shows that the subject is the doer of the action, the verb is in the active voice.

Examples:

1. Children painted these pictures. (Children – subject; painted – verb; pictures – object)
2. James writes a letter (James – subject; writes – verb; letter – object)

When the verb in a sentence shows that the subject is not the doer of the action, the verb is in the passive voice. (Generally you will find “by” in the sentence. If “by” is not there, you can put a question “Who?”, you will get an answer.)

Examples:

1. These pictures were painted by children: (pictures – subject; painted – verb; children - object)
2. A letter is written by James (letter – subject, written – verb; James – Object)

Rules for conversion from Active to Passive Voice

1. The subject and object are interchanged
2. The preposition BY is added before the object
3. The verb is changed to past participle (3rd form of verb)
4. A new auxiliary is added to the Past Participle form of verb.
5. If the subject or the object in an active voice sentence is a pronoun (I, we, you, he, she, they, it) it changes: (I-me; we-us; you-you; he-him; she-her; they-them; it-it) and vice-versa. e.g. I wrote a letter – A letter was written by me. The prefect does keep accusing me daily – I am being accused by the prefect daily.
6. If the subject in the active voice sentence is unknown or unimportant or obvious, by + object is omitted. We make butter from cow's milk. Butter is made from cow's milk.
7. If the verb in the active voice sentence has a modal in it, the verb is changed to – modal + be + the past participle. e.g. Rajesh can lift this box. This box can be lifted by Rajesh. We should obey the rules. The rules should be obeyed.
8. When there are two objects, only one object is interchanged. The second object remains unchanged. (He told me a story – He- subject; me – object 1; a story – object 2) (I was told a story by him; A story was told to me by him)

The table below shows how the verb is changed into its passive voice form in different tenses.

Tense	Active Voice	Passive Voice
The simple present	He eats an apple	An apple is eaten by him.
The present continuous	He is eating an apple.	An apple is being eaten by him.
The present perfect	He has eaten an apple.	An apple has been eaten by him.
The simple past	He ate an apple.	An apple was eaten by him.
The past continuous	He was eating an apple	An apple was being eaten by him
The past perfect	He had eaten an apple	An apple had been eaten by him
The simple future	He will eat an apple	An apple will be eaten by him.
The Future continuous	He will be eating an apple.	An apple will have been eaten by him.
The Future in the past	He would have eaten an apple	An apple would have been eaten by him

Note: Some of the sentences like – sentences constructed using auxiliary verbs(Hariharan is a good boy); perfect continuous tenses (in all the three time periods – Present, Past, Future) (My room mate has been copying my homework) and intransitive verbs (I go to temple or she has gone to the market) cannot be converted into passive form .