

## Change in Voice

# PASSIVE & NON-AGGRESSIVE

### ACTIVE VOICE



Wild penguins  
attacked my sister.

### PASSIVE VOICE



My sister was attacked  
by wild penguins.

### Passive Voice Construction

SUBJECT + AUXILIARY VERB (TO BE) + MAIN VERB (PAST PARTICIPLE)

#### PRESENT TENSE

The game is being played.

#### FUTURE TENSE

The game's MVP  
will be announced in  
the 4th quarter.

#### PAST TENSE

The player was tripped.



### Passive Voice WHAT IS IT FOR?

Technical and scientific writers prefer Passive voice as it has a more "objective" feel:

*"Water is composed of two elements".*

Passive voice help to **distance the author or hide things**, as in the statement:

*"Mistakes were made..."*

Passive voice may be used intentionally to **call attention to the object**:

*"Seventy men were needed to construct the pavilion."*



### Passive Voice HOW OFTEN CAN I USE IT?

10%

In average, daily writing, it is suggested that **not more than 10%** of writing should be in the passive.

Most writers agree that **average writing with even 15%** passive sentences sounds **watered down**.

15%

Some camps say that **up to 20% is acceptable**.

10% 15% 20%

Consider these two sentences:

1. Our sentences are constructed in either the 'active' or the 'passive' voice. (Passive)
2. We construct our sentences in either the 'active' or the 'passive' voice. (Active)

The voice depends on where we place the emphasis.

1. If the emphasis is placed on the object of the action, the sentence is passive.

2. If the emphasis is placed on the subject, the sentence is active.

As writers we prefer to read fiction with a passive content of less than 5%, and non-fiction, including business writing, with a passive content of less than 10%. If we overuse the passive voice, our writing becomes less user-friendly and our readability statistics decrease. This defeats our purpose, which is to communicate.

**However, we do use the passive voice:**

1. If we do not know who committed an action. **Example:** My dog was let out of the garden.
2. If we are expressing a general truth. **Example:** Dogs are born to be adored.
3. If we want to be vague about who is responsible for an action. Politicians often use the passive voice. **Example:** Mistakes were made. Crimes were committed.
4. If we want to emphasize the object of the action over the subject. **Example:** A cure for the common cold has been announced.
5. If we are writing in a scientific genre. **Example:** The powder was dissolved in water. (However, more scientists are now using the active voice in their writing.)

### Rules for Voice change

Tense	Active Voice	Passive Voice
<b>Present Simple</b>	Sub + <u>V1</u> + Obj	Obj + <u>is/am/are</u> + V3 + by + Sub
<b>Past Simple</b>	Sub + <u>V2</u> + Obj	Obj + <u>was/were</u> + V3 + by + Sub
<b>Future Simple</b>	Sub + <u>will/shall</u> + V1 + Obj	Obj + <u>will/shall + be</u> + V3 + by + Sub
<b>Present Continuous</b>	Sub + <u>is/am/are + V1 + ing</u> + Obj	Obj + <u>is/am/are + being</u> + V3 + by + Sub
<b>Past Continuous</b>	Sub + <u>was/were + V1 + ing</u> + Obj	Obj + <u>was/were + being</u> + V3 + by + Sub
<b>Future Continuous</b>	Sub + <u>will/shall + be + V1 + ing</u> + Obj	Obj + <u>will/shall + being</u> + V3 + by + Sub
<b>Present Perfect</b>	Sub + <u>have/has + V3</u> + Obj	Obj + <u>have/has + been</u> + V3 + by + Sub
<b>Past Perfect</b>	Sub + <u>had + V3</u> + Obj	Obj + <u>had + been</u> + V3 + by + Sub
<b>Future Perfect</b>	Sub + <u>will/shall + have + V3</u> + Obj	Obj + <u>will/shall/would + have + been</u> + V3 + by + Obj

### **Modals used in Passive Voice**

can, could, shall, should, will, would, may, might, must, ought to etc.

**1. Project specifications are being requested by the client. (P)**

- a. The client is requesting project specifications. (A)
- b. The client was requesting project specifications. (A)
- c. The client requesting project specifications. (A)
- d. The client has been requesting project specifications. (A)

**2. This method exhibited an excellent performance in terms of sensitivity and speed. (A)**

- a. An excellent performance is exhibited by this method in terms of sensitivity and speed. (P)
- b. An excellent performance had exhibited by this method in terms of sensitivity and speed. (P)
- c. An excellent performance has exhibited by this method in terms of sensitivity and speed. (P)
- d. An excellent performance was exhibited by this method in terms of sensitivity and speed. (P)

**3. We were facing many challenges at that time. (A)**

- a. Many challenges were being faced by us at that time. (P)
- b. Many challenges are being faced by us at that time. (P)
- c. Many challenges have been faced by us at that time. (P)
- d. Many challenges had been faced by us at that time. (P)

**4. Satisfactory results were obtained from application of the method. (P)**

- a. Application of the method obtained satisfactory results. (A)
- b. Application of the method is obtained satisfactory results. (A)
- c. Application of the method has obtained satisfactory results. (A)
- d. Application of the method was obtained satisfactory results. (A)