

## Language Matters Passive voice



Reference Section (page 332)

In the **passive voice**, the **subject** of the verb **receives** the action. When sentences are in the **active voice**, the subject of the verb **performs** the action.

Plastic bottles are frequently discarded thoughtlessly. (passive voice)

Many people discard plastic bottles thoughtlessly. (active voice)

The passive is formed from an appropriate tense of the verb '**be**' + **past participle** of the main verb:

The bottles were dumped in the hallway. (simple past)

They will be collected by the janitor. (future)

The passive voice is more **formal** and **impersonal** than the active voice, which makes writing sound more **direct** and **personal**. The passive voice is used in **objective** writing, e.g. reports, accounts of scientific experiments. The active voice is used in **personal** writing, e.g. journals, first-person narratives.