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Chapter Thirty

Active & Passive voice

Verbs are also said to be either-

Active → The executive committee approved the new policy (or)

Passive → The new policy was approved by the executive committee

In the active voice, the subject and verb relationship is straightforward: the subject is a be-er or a do-er and the verb moves the sentence along.

In the **passive voice**, the subject of the sentence is neither a do-er or a be-er, but is acted upon by some other **agent** or by something unnamed.

As a general rule, speak and write in the active form yet use the passive voice in some circumstance as under

- (1) When we want to change the focus of the sentence:

President Kennedy was killed by Lee Harvey Oswald.

(Here “Killed President” is more important than who killed them)

- (2) When who or what causes the action is unknown or unimportant or obvious or 'people in general':

- He was arrested (obvious agent, the police).
- My bike has been stolen (unknown agent).
- The road is being repaired (unimportant agent).
- The form can be obtained from the post office (people in general).

The first three sentences has been written is passive voice because in these sentences “what happened” is important but not “who did it”

- (3) To hide the responsibility of a specific person for an unpleasant event.

e.g. A lot of mistakes **have been made**.

(instead of “You have made a lot of mistakes”.)

- (4) Passive voice is particularly useful **when it is more important to draw our attention to the person or thing acted upon:**

The unidentified victim was apparently struck during the early morning hours.

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(5) In scientific or technical writing or lab reports and mechanical process

Instead of writing "I poured 20 ml of acid into the beaker," we would write

"20 ml of acid is/was poured into the beaker."

"The first coat of primer paint is applied immediately after the acid rinse."

Construction of the Passive Voice

The structure of the **passive voice** is very simple:

subject + auxiliary verb (be) + main verb (past participle)

The main verb is **always** in its past participle form.

Look at these examples:

↳ Water is drunk by everyone.

↳ 100 people are employed by this company.

↳ I am paid in dollar.

Here are some examples :

Infinitive		To be washed (passive)
Simple	present	It is washed.
	past	It was washed.
	future	It will be washed.
	conditional	It would be washed.
Continuous	present	It is being washed.
	past	It was being washed.
	Future	No passive form
	conditional	It would be being washed.
Perfect	present	It has been washed.
	past	It had been washed.
	future	It will have been washed.
	conditional	It would have been washed.

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Present Simple	Active	He delivers the parcels.
	Passive	The parcels are delivered.
Present Continuous	Active	He is delivering the parcels.
	Passive	The parcels are being delivered.
Present Perfect	Active	He has delivered the parcels.
	Passive	The parcels have been delivered.
Past Simple	Active	He delivered the parcels.
	Passive	The parcels were delivered.
Past Continuous	Active	He was delivering the parcels.
	Passive	The parcels were being delivered.
Past Perfect	Active	He had delivered the parcels.
	Passive	The parcels had been delivered.
Future Simple	Active	He will deliver the parcels.
	Passive	The parcels will be delivered
Future Perfect	Active	He will have delivered the parcels.
	Passive	The parcels will have been delivered.
Present Infinitive	Active	He is expected to deliver the parcels.
	Passive	The parcels are expected to be delivered.
Perfect Infinitive	Active	He is said to have delivered the parcels.
	Passive	The parcels are said to have been delivered.
Simple-ing form	Active	I object to his delivering the parcels.
	Passive	I object to the parcels being delivered.
Perfect-ing form	Active	Having delivered the parcels,...
	Passive	The parcels having been delivered, ...
Modals	Active	He must deliver the parcels.
	Passive	The parcels must be delivered.
Modal perfects	Active	He must have delivered the parcels.
	Passive	The parcels must have been delivered.

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We can use the verb **to get** instead of the verb **to be** in everyday speech when we talk about things that happen by accident or unexpectedly.

e.g. Four people **got hurt** in the car crash.

Note- However, we cannot use **get** to describe states.

e.g. That house **is** (NOT gets) **owned** by my uncle.

Changing from active into passive.

Subject to some exceptions only transitive verbs (verbs followed by an object) can be changed into the passive.

e.g. Grandma knitted my jumper. → My jumper **was knitted** by Grandma.

BUT: They travelled to Lisbon last summer (intransitive verb). → **no passive**.

Some transitive verbs (mentioned below) cannot be changed into the passive.

↳ **belong, have** (=own),

↳ **fit** (=be the right size or shape),

↳ **lack, resemble, seem, suit,**

e.g. I have a shower every morning (NOT ~~A shower is had by me...~~)

The verb **let** has no passive form, so we use a passive form of allow/permit/give permission.

e.g. The teacher let us leave early. → We **were allowed** to leave early.

When the verb of the active sentence is followed by a preposition, the preposition is kept in the passive sentence as well. We never separate the verb and preposition(s) in the passive.

e.g. They **took** the company **over** in 2001

The company **was taken over** (by them) in 2001.

The verbs hear, see, make are followed by the bare infinitive in the active, but by the to-infinitive in the passive.

e.g. They saw him leave the building. → He **was seen to leave** the building.

Key features of passive voice

- Sentence begins with an object instead of a subject
- Every main verb is in past participle
- Pronouns change as follows-

I	Me	you	you	she	her	they	them
We	Us	he	him	it	Its	----	

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Declarative sentences- In passive voice, all the parts are fixed except “to be/ to have” forms. They require to be changed according to the tenses as follows.

Tense		Active
Simple present	Active	He plays cricket every day.
	Passive	Cricket is played by him every day.
Continuous present	Active	We are watching a movie.
	Passive	The movie is being watched by him.
Perfect present	Active	They have finished the term.
	Passive	The term has been finished by them.
Simple past	Active	Aakash sung two songs.
	Passive	Two songs were sung by Aakash.
Continuous past	Active	She was cooking Panjabi dishes.
	Passive	Panjabi dishes were being cooked by her.
Perfect past	Active	Student had selected him captain last year
	Passive	He was selected captain by student last year
Simple future	Active	I shall leave you soon
	Passive	You will be left soon by me
Continuous future	Active	Not possible
	Passive	
Perfect future	Active	He will have completed four years in the office
	Passive	Four years will have been completed by him in office

Remember-

- In all three simple tenses take these forms of **to be** (am, is, are, was, were, will be, shall be) while changing into passive
- Both the continuous tense (present & past) take “being” while changing into passive
- In all three tenses take “been” while changing into passive

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Question (interrogative) sentences– while converting active voice questions into passive voice questions, words will be replaced as under.

- Present simple– am/are/is
- Present continuous– is being/are being
- Present perfect– has been/have been
- Simple past– was/were
- Past continuous– was being/were being
- Modals will, can etc– will be, can be, etc

Active voice	Passive voice
Does she like English movie?	Are English movie liked by her?
Did Aakash write this sentences?	Was this sentence written by Aakash?
Have they built up this house?	Has this house been built up by them?
Which the picture is she drawing?	Which picture is being drawn by him?
Who broke the table?	By whom the table is/was broken?
What have they done?	What has been done by them?
Will you help her?	Will she be helped by you?

Tense	Subject	Auxiliary		Past Participle
		Singular	Plural	
Present	The car/cars	is	are	designed.
Present perfect	The car/cars	has been	have been	designed.
Past	The car/cars	was	were	designed.
Past perfect	The car/cars	had been	had been	designed.
Future	The car/cars	will be	will be	designed.
Future perfect	The car/cars	will have been	will have been	designed.
Present continuous	The car/cars	is being	are being	designed.
Past continuous	The car/cars	was being	were being	designed.

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Tense	Active	Passive
Present simple	I make a cake.	A cake is made (by me).
Present cont.	I am making a cake.	A cake is being made (by me).
Present perfect	I have made a cake.	A cake has been made (by me).
Present perfect continuous	I have been making a cake.	passive not possible.
Past simple	I made a cake.	A cake was made (by me).
Past continuous	I was making a cake.	A cake was being made (by me).
Past perfect	I had made a cake.	A cake had been made (by me).
Past perfect cont.	I had been making a cake.	passive not possible.
Future simple	I will make a cake.	A cake will be made (by me).
Future cont.	I will be making a cake.	passive not possible.
Future perfect	I will have made a cake.	A cake will have been made .
Future perfect continuous	I will have been making a cake.	passive not possible

Verbs with two objects - Some verbs that have two objects can make two different active sentences, and so two different passive sentences too:

Give > Active: He gave me the book / He gave the book to me.

You can choose either of the two objects to be the subject of the passive sentence.

- Passive: I was given the book (by him)/ The book was given to me (by him).

Other verbs like this are: **ask, offer, teach, tell, lend, promise, sell, throw.**

Try an exercise about this here- The passive in subordinate clauses- You can make the passive in a subordinate clause that has subject and normal conjugated verb. This is really same as a normal passive.

- Active: I thought that Parul had kissed Mahesh.
- Passive: I thought that Mahesh had been kissed by Parul.
- Active: He knew that people had built the church in 1915.
- Passive: He knew that the church had been built in 1915.

You can also make the passive using a passive gerund or a passive infinitive in the same place as a normal gerund or infinitive.

- The child loves being cuddled. / She would like to be promoted.
- She would like to be promoted.

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Passive voice for all tenses rules

Present Simple Tense- Auxiliary verb in passive voice: am/is/are

Active voice:

He sings a song.

He does not sing a song.

Does he sing a song ?

Passive voice:

A song **is** sung by him.

A song **is not** sung by him.

Is a song sung by him?

Present Cont.Tense–

Auxiliary verb in passive voice: am being/ is being/ are being

Active voice:

I am writing a letter

I am not writing a letter.

Am I writing a letter?

Passive voice:

A letter **is being** written by me.

A letter **is not being** written by me.

Is a letter **being** written by me?

Present Perfect Tense-

Auxiliary verb in passive voice: has been/ have been

Active voice:

She has finished his work

She has not finished her work.

Has she finished her work?

Passive voice:

Her work **has been** finished by her.

Her work **has not been** finished by her.

Has her work **been** finished by her ?

Past Simple Tense- Auxiliary verb in the passive voice: was/were

Active voice:

I killed a snake

I did not kill a snake.

Did I kill a snake?

Passive voice:

A snake **was** killed by me.

A snake **was not** killed by me.

Was a snake killed by me?

Past Cont. Tense- Auxiliary verb in passive voice: was being/were being

Active voice:

He was driving a car.

He was not driving a car.

Was he driving a car?

Passive voice:

A car **was being** driven by him.

A car **was not being** driven by him.

Was a car **being** driven by him?

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Past Perfect Tense- Auxiliary verb in the passive voice: had been

Active voice	They had completed the assignment.
Passive voice	The assignment had been completed by them.
Active voice	They had not completed the assignment.
Passive voice	The assignment had not been complete by them.
Active voice	Had they completed the assignment?
Passive voice	Had the assignment been completed by them?

Future Simple Tense- Auxiliary verb in passive voice: will be

Active voice:	Passive voice:
She will buy a car.	A car will be bought by her.
She will not buy a car.	A car will not be bought by her.
Will she buy a car?	Will a car be bought by her?

Future Perfect Tense- Auxiliary verb in the passive voice: will have been

Active voice:	Passive voice:
You will have started the job.	The job will have been started by you.
You will have not started the job	The job will not have been started by you.
Will you have started the job?	Will the job have been started by you?

Note: The following tenses cannot be changed into passive voice.

1. Present perfect continuous tense
2. Past perfect continuous tense
3. Future continuous & Future perfect continuous tense

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Focus on the doer of the action (active voice)

Last night, **my sister had** a baby girl. **She gave** birth at home with the help of a doctor. **Her baby weighed** nine pounds. After the birth, **my sister and brother-in-law invited** us to see the new baby. **They** proudly **showed** us their new baby. **They received** flowers and gifts. **They were** delighted with this special event.

Focus on the baby: (passive voice)

Last night, **my niece was born**. **The baby girl was delivered** with the help of a doctor. After birth, **she was** proudly **shown** to us. **She received** flowers and gifts. **This baby girl**, who **weighed** nine pounds, Everyone **delighted** with her arrival.

Passive Verb Forms

Simple Present	Active	We send gifts, new parents.
	Passive	New parents are sent gifts (by us.)
Present continuous	Active	We are sending our best wishes.
	Passive	Best wishes are being sent .
Present perfect	Active	We have sent flowers daily.
	Passive	Flowers have been sent daily.
Present Perfect continuous- Not used in the passive voice		

Simple Past	Active	My brother sent (them) a car seat.
	Passive	A car seat was sent (to them) by my brother.
Past continuous	Active	Friends were sending baby clothes.
	Passive	Baby clothes were being sent by friends.
Past Perfect	Active	The parents had sent a message before the baby's birth.
	Passive	A message had been sent immediately before the baby's birth.
Past Perfect continuous - Not used in the passive voice		

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Simple Future	Active	The parents will send a baby announcement to friends.
	Passive	A baby announcement will be sent to friends (by the parents.)
Future continuous Not used in the passive voice		
Future perfect	Active	Everyone will have heard the news within minutes.
	Passive	The news will have been heard by everyone within minutes.
Future perfect continuous- Not used in the passive voice		

Be going	Active	The grandparents are also going to send gifts.
	Passive	Gifts are also going to be sent by grandparents.
Infinitive phrase	Active	The father intends to help the new mother a lot
	Passive	The mother hopes to be helped a lot by the father.
Gerund phrase	Active	Friends suggest calling them if the parents need help.
	Passive	Friends suggest being called if help is needed (the new parents.)

Singular vs. Plural Agreement

Present	His brother is invited.	His brother and I are invited.
Present cont.	His brother is being invited.	His brother and I are being invited.
Past	His brother was invited.	His brother and I were invited.
Past cont.	His brother was being invited.	His brother and I were being invited.
Present Perfect	His brother has been invited.	His brother and I have been invited.

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Imperatives

- Do this job. / Let this job be done.
- Teach your son. / Let your son be taught.
- Control your party men. / Your party men should be controlled.
- Obey your parents. / You are advised to obey your parents.
- Don't do this./ You are requested not to do this.
- Punish the culprits. / Let the culprits be punished.
- Don't allow anybody to peep inside . / You are ordered not to allow anybody to peep inside.
- Pay your fees. / Let your fees be paid today.

Infinitive

I am to do this work. This work is to be done by me.

Your wife is to learn English. / English is to be learnt by your wife.

I am to teach her English./ English is to be taught to her by me.

Seema had to abstain him from smoking.

He had to be abstained from smoking by Seema.

I have to assist my wife in domestic works.

My wife has to be assisted in domestic works by me .

I was to appreciate her but I forgot. / She was to be appreciated by me but I forgot.

They are to deliver speech in the program.

Speech is to be delivered in the program by them.

Is he to select her wedding dress? / Is her wedding dress to be selected by him?

He has to favour his girl friend. / His girl friend is to be favoured by him.

He was to give a precious gift to her./ She was to be given a precious gift by him.

He was to give a precious gift to her./ A precious gift was to be given to her by him.