

Active and Passive Voice

Definition: Voice in grammar indicates whether the subject of a sentence performs or receives the action of the verb.

Active Voice: The subject performs the action. The doer of the action is emphasized.

Passive Voice: The subject receives the action. The action itself or the receiver of the action is emphasized, and the doer (agent) is often less important or unknown.

Grammar Rules (General Transformation):

1. **Object becomes Subject:** The object of the active verb becomes the subject of the passive verb.
2. **Verb Form:** The active verb is changed into a passive form, which always consists of a form of the auxiliary verb 'to be' (is, am, are, was, were, been, being) followed by the main verb's past participle (V3).

Subject becomes Agent: The subject of the active verb becomes the object of the preposition 'by' in the passive voice (the agent), if it is included.

Errors & Exceptions & Nuance (Common Misconceptions):

'By' is not always present: Passive sentences do not always explicitly state the agent using 'by'. The agent is often omitted if it is **vague**, **unknown**, or **unimportant**.

Error: The book was given. (Thought to be incomplete because 'by' is missing)

Correct: The book was given. (Understood that someone gave the book; passive is correct without 'by')

Expert Note: Focus on whether the subject is performing or receiving the action, rather than solely relying on 'by'.

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V3 does not always mean Passive: While passive voice always uses V3, a verb in V3 form is not always passive.

It can be part of an **active perfect tense** or **function as an adjective** (past participle).

Examples:

1. He **has given** a book. (Active - Subject 'he' performs the action, Present Perfect structure)
2. They **were shocked**. (Active - 'shocked' describes their state/emotion, not an action performed on them by an agent)

'Be/Being/Been + V3' for Passive: The passive voice requires an auxiliary form of 'to be' (is, am, are, was, were, been, being) followed by the main verb's V3.

1. **Active:** 'Has/Have/Had + V3' (e.g., He has done the work.)

Passive: 'Has/Have/Had + **been** + V3' (e.g., The work has **been done** by him.)

2. **Active (Continuous):** 'Is/Am/Are/Was/Were + V-ing' (e.g., He is doing the work.)

Passive (Continuous): 'Is/Am/Are/Was/Were + **being** + V3' (e.g., The work is **being done** by him.)

3. **Active (Modal/Future):** 'Will/Shall/Can/Could... + V1' (e.g., He will do the work.)

Passive (Modal/Future): 'Will/Shall/Can/Could... + **be** + V3' (e.g., The work will **be done** by him.)

4. **Note:** The key is the 'be' form (be, being, been) **immediately followed by** the V3 of the main verb to signify passive voice. If 'be' form is followed by an adjective or a V-ing, it is active.

Tense-wise Passive Conversions

Grammar Rules:

Rule: Not all 12 tenses have a passive form. Only 8 tenses can be converted into passive voice.

No Passive for: Present Perfect Continuous, Past Perfect Continuous, Future Continuous, Future Perfect Continuous.

Rule: When converting from active to passive voice (or vice versa), the **tense of the sentence must not change**.

1. Simple Present Tense

Passive: O + is/am/are + V3 (+ by + agent)

He writes a book. → A book is written by him.

2. Present Continuous Tense

Passive: O + is/am/are + being + V3 (+ by + agent)

He is writing a book. → A book is being written by him.

3. Present Perfect Tense

Passive: O + has/have + been + V3 (+ by + agent)

He has written a book. → A book has been written by him.

4. Simple Past Tense

Passive: O + was/were + V3 (+ by + agent)

He wrote a book. → A book was written by him.

5. Past Continuous Tense

Passive: O + was/were + being + V3 (+ by + agent)

Ex: He was writing a book. → A book was being written by him.

6. Past Perfect Tense

Passive: O + had + been + V3 (+ by + agent)

He had written a book. → A book had been written by him.

7. Simple Future Tense

Passive O + will/shall + be + V3 (+ by + agent)

Ex: He will write a book. → A book will be written by him.

Note: "Shall" used with I/we (traditional), but "will" is now common for all.

8. Future Perfect Tense

Passive: O + will/shall + have + been + V3 (+ by + agent)

Ex: He will have written a book. → A book will have been written by him.

Advanced Passive Voice Transformations

Type -1 Sentences with Two Objects

Definition: Some transitive verbs can take two objects: a direct object (the thing acted upon) and an indirect object (the person/thing to whom/for whom the action is done).

Grammar Rules:

1. **Passive in Two Ways:** If both objects are direct objects of the verb (as a compound object), the passive voice can be formed in two grammatically correct ways, by making either object the subject of the passive sentence.
 1. **Active:** The manager offered the new staff a pay raise.
 - Passive (IO as Subject):** The new staff were offered a pay raise.
 - Passive (DO as Subject):** A pay raise was offered to the new staff.
2. **Active:** The jeweler showed the potential buyer a massive diamond ring.
 - Passive (IO as Subject):** The potential buyer was shown a massive diamond ring.
 - Passive (DO as Subject):** A massive diamond ring was shown to the potential buyer.

3. **Active:** The executives signed the contract and the final blueprints quickly.
Passive (Compound DO as Subject): The contract and the final blueprints were signed quickly by the executives.
 (Note: Since there is no Indirect Object, there is only one passive option here.)
4. **Active:** The board has promised us extra funding for our research project.
Passive (IO as Subject): We have been promised extra funding for our research project.
Passive (DO as Subject): Extra funding has been promised to us for our research project.
5. **Active:** People believe that the CEO concealed crucial information.
Passive (Personal Passive): The CEO is believed to have concealed crucial information.
 (Note: This sentence does not have a traditional IO/DO structure that allows for two simple passive forms.)
Nuance: The preposition 'to' or 'for' is often used before the indirect object when the direct object becomes the subject.

Errors & Exceptions & Nuance:

Priority in Options: If an exam question provides both grammatically correct passive forms, generally prioritize the one where the object closer to the verb in the active sentence becomes the subject of the passive. (The indirect object is usually closer).

Expert Note: This priority is secondary to grammatical correctness. If one option contains a grammatical error (e.g., incorrect auxiliary verb), that option is incorrect regardless of object priority.

Type -2 One Object as Prepositional

Object: If one of the objects is already part of a prepositional phrase in the active voice, it cannot become the subject of the passive voice. Only the direct object of the verb can.

Active: She presented a ring to him. (A ring = direct object; to him = prepositional phrase, 'him' is object of 'to')

Passive: A ring **was presented** to him by her. (Only one passive form using 'a ring' as subject)

Error: He was presented a ring by her. (Incorrect, as 'him' was part of a prepositional phrase)

- **Note:** Only direct objects of the verb can be promoted to subject in passive voice.

Type -3 Omission of Agent ('by + X')

Definition: The agent (the doer of the action in the active sentence, introduced by 'by' in passive) is often omitted in passive voice under certain conditions.

Grammar Rules:

1. **Vague/Indefinite Agents:** Omit 'by + agent' if the agent is **vague, general, or unimportant** (e.g., **somebody, anybody, nobody, one, people, they, us, them**).
1. **Active:** Somebody cut the telephone wire.
Passive: The telephone wire **was cut**. (Agent 'by somebody' is omitted)
2. **Active:** People speak English all over the world.
Passive: English **is spoken** all over the world. (Agent 'by people' is omitted)
3. **Active:** No one should give unsolicited advice.
Passive: Unsolicited advice **should not be given**. (Agent 'by no one' is omitted; negation is incorporated into the passive verb)
4. **Active:** One should keep one's promises.
Passive: Promises **should be kept**. (Agent 'by one' is omitted)

2. **Obvious Agent:** If the agent is obvious from the context (e.g., police in arresting, doctor in treating).

1. **Active:** The police arrested the thief.

Passive: The thief **was arrested**. (Agent 'by the police' is usually omitted)

Errors & Exceptions & Nuance:

Strict Grammatical Correctness (in options):

While usually omitted, if exam options include a vague agent (e.g., 'by somebody') and other options are grammatically incorrect, the option with the vague agent might be the correct choice.

Note: Prioritize correct tense and verb form above agent omission, especially if other options contain fundamental errors.

'Clean' vs. 'Somebody' / 'Cleaner':

- **Active:** Somebody cleaned the room.

Passive (Preferred): The room **was cleaned**. (Agent omitted)

- **Nuance:** If given options like 'The room was cleaned by somebody' vs. 'The cleaner cleaned the room' (as active), and the passive question was 'The room was cleaned', an active form like 'Somebody cleaned the room' is more appropriate due to the vagueness of the original passive agent (implied).

If the passive was 'The room was cleaned by the cleaner', then 'The cleaner cleaned the room' is the direct active conversion.

Type -3 Passive of Interrogative Sentences

Definition: Converting question sentences from active to passive voice **while maintaining the interrogative structure**.

Grammar Rules:

1. **Maintain Interrogative Form (Inversion):** The passive voice of an interrogative sentence must also be interrogative. This usually means the auxiliary verb comes before the subject.

- **Active:** Does he help you?

Passive: **Are you helped** by him?

2. **'Who' to 'By Whom':** If the active sentence starts with 'Who' (subject), the passive sentence starts with 'By whom'.

- **Active:** Who wrote the Ramayana?

Passive: **By whom was** the Ramayana written?

Nuance: Sometimes 'Who...by' is used, but 'By whom' at the beginning is grammatically preferred for formal contexts and usually given priority in exams.

Error: Who was the Ramayana written by? (Less formal, but sometimes acceptable if 'by whom' is not an option)

Note: Ensure inversion (auxiliary verb before subject) in the passive interrogative sentence.

3. **'Whom' to 'Who':** If the active sentence starts with 'Whom' (object), the passive sentence starts with 'Who'.

- **Active:** Whom do you look for?

Passive: **Who is looked** for by you?

4. **'Do/Does/Did' eliminated:** The auxiliary verbs 'do', 'does', 'did' are removed in the passive voice. The appropriate 'to be' form (is/am/are/was/were) is used instead.

- **Active:** Did the noise frighten you?

Passive: **Were you frightened** by the noise?

5. **'What/Why/When/Where/How' remain:** Other 'Wh-' question words (what, why, when, where, how) remain unchanged at the beginning of the passive sentence.

- **Active:** Why did he punish you?

Passive: **Why were you punished** by him?

Errors & Exceptions & Nuance:

Inversion is Key: The most common error is failing to invert (auxiliary before subject) in the passive interrogative.

1. By whom the Ramayana was written?(X)

By whom **was the Ramayana written?**

Note: Always check for inversion in interrogative sentences.

'What' as Subject/Object:

If 'What' is the object: What do you mean? -> What is meant by you?

If 'What' is the subject: What annoys you? -> By what are you annoyed? (Less common)

Type – 4 Passive of Imperative Sentences

Definition: Converting imperative sentences (commands, requests, advice, suggestions) into passive voice.

Grammar Rules:

1. **Rule – 1 Orders (with Object):**

Rule 1: Using 'Let' + B + V3:

1. **Active:** Shut the door.

Passive: Let the door be shut.

Nuance: 'Let the door shut' is incorrect as it implies the door shuts itself. 'Let the door be shut' means someone should shut it.

Using 'You are ordered/commanded to + V1':

1. **Active:** Shut the door.

Passive: You are ordered to shut the door.

Note: Both forms are correct. The choice depends on the options provided

2. **Orders (without Object):** If the imperative sentence has no direct object.

1. **Active:** Go there. (No object)

Passive: You are ordered to go there. (Cannot use 'Let')

Note: When there's no object, 'You are ordered/requested/advised to' is the only option.

3. **Requests:**

Rule: Using 'You are requested to + V1':

1. **Active:** Please help me. / Kindly do the work.

Passive: You are requested to help me. / You are requested to do the work.

Nuance: The words 'please' or 'kindly' are omitted in the passive form, as 'You are requested' already conveys the request.

4. **Advice/Suggestions:**

Rule 1: Using 'Object + Should/Must + Be + V3': (For explicit objects)

1. **Active:** Respect your elders.

Passive: Your elders should be respected.

Rule 2: Using 'Let us + V1' (for suggestions involving the speaker):

2. **Active:** Let us help the poor.

Passive: Let the poor be helped. / It is suggested that the poor should be helped.

Nuance: 'Should' is generally preferred for advice; 'must' indicates stronger obligation. 'Let us' suggests 'It is suggested that we should...'

3. **Example:** Let us organize a party. -> A party should be organized.

Errors & Exceptions & Nuance:**'Let' + Bare Infinitive for**

Permission/Causative: The passive form changes depending on whether 'let' signifies an order, suggestion, or permission.

Permission/Causative: Active 'Let them play' (Allow them to play) -> Passive 'They may be allowed to play'. (Using 'may' for permission)

Note: 'Let' is versatile. Analyze its meaning in context.

Negation in Imperatives:

- **Active:** Don't laugh at me.

Passive: Let me not be laughed at. / You are ordered not to laugh at me.

Note: 'Not' must be correctly placed to negate the appropriate part of the passive structure. In 'Let' constructions, 'not' comes after 'let + object' and before 'be'.

Type – 5 Passive with Fixed Prepositions (Prepositional Verbs)

Definition: Some verbs are followed by specific prepositions, forming idiomatic expressions or phrasal verbs.

In passive voice, this preposition must be retained with the verb. The agent (if included) is introduced by 'by'.

Grammar Rules:

1. **Retain Preposition:** The preposition that follows the verb in the active voice must remain with the verb in the passive voice.
1. **Active:** I know him.
Passive: He is **known to** me. (Not 'by me')
2. **Active:** His behavior surprised me.
Passive: I was **surprised at** his behavior. (Not 'by his behavior')
3. **Active:** A thick layer of snow covers the mountains.
Passive: The mountains are **covered with** a thick layer of snow. (Not 'by snow')
4. **Active:** Snakes frighten me.
Passive: I am **frightened at** snakes. (Not 'by snakes')
5. **Active:** Everybody laughed at the joker.
Passive: The joker was **laughed at** by everybody. ('at' is essential)

Common Fixed Prepositions:

1. **Known to** (person)
2. **Surprised/Astonished/Shocked/Alarmed/Diappointed/Pleased/Annoyed at/by** (event/thing) or **with** (person)
3. **Covered with**
4. **Frightened/Alarmed at**
5. **Interested in**
6. **Contained in**
7. **Pleased with**
8. **Expert Note:** Memorize common fixed prepositions as they are frequently tested in active/passive transformations.

Type – 6 Passive of Infinitives ('To + V1')

Definition: Converting infinitive phrases from active to passive voice.

Grammar Rules:

1. **Active:** I want to do the work.
Passive: I want **the work to be done**.
2. **Structures like 'It's time':**
 1. **Active:** It's time to water the plants. (No agent performing the action by 'it's time')
 - Passive:** It's time **for the plants to be watered**.
2. **Active:** There is no time to lose.
Passive: There is no time **to be lost**.
- Expert Note:** When 'It's time' introduces a specific action with an object, use 'for + object + to be V3'.
3. **No Passive if Action Doesn't Transfer:** If the infinitive's action doesn't transfer to an object (i.e., it's intransitive), it cannot be made passive.
 1. **It's time to go to Patna.** (You are going; the action doesn't transfer to 'Patna' as an object receiving 'go'). No passive is possible for 'to go'.

Errors & Exceptions & Nuance:

Subjective Infinitives: Some sentences express **desire/liking** for an action to be done to oneself.

- **Active:** Women like men to flatter them. (Women like the act of being flattered by men).

Passive: Women like **to be flattered** by men.

- **Active:** He likes people to praise him. (He likes the act of being praised).

Passive: He likes **to be praised** by people.

Note: In such cases, the infinitive phrase 'to flatter them' becomes 'to be flattered', with the 'by agent' often implied or explicitly added.

Type – 7 Passive of Verbs of Perception and Causative Verbs (Make, Bid, Let, Get)

Definition: Special rules apply to verbs of perception (**see, hear, watch**) and causative verbs (**make, bid, let, get, have**) that take a bare infinitive (without 'to') in active voice.

Grammar Rules:

1. **Verbs of Perception (See, Hear, Watch, Feel):**

I saw him cross the road. -> He **was seen to cross** the road by me.

2. **Causative Verb 'Make':**

- I made him wash the clothes. -> He **was made to wash** the clothes by me.

3. **Causative Verb 'Bid' (Command):**

He bade me leave the room. -> I **was bidden to leave** the room by him.

4. **Causative Verb 'Let':**

Passive 1 (If 'let' means allow/permit):
Object + may be allowed + **To-Infinitive** + (by + Agent)

- Let him play. -> He **may be allowed to play**.

Passive 2 (If 'let' is a command/suggestion):

See Passive of Imperatives (Let + B + V3)

- Let me do this. -> This **may be allowed to be done** by me OR This **should be done** by me.

5. Causative Verb 'Get':

- I get him to do all the work. -> I **get all the work done** by him. (Here, the object 'work' is acted upon).

Note: The addition of 'to' before the infinitive in passive voice for verbs like 'see, hear, make, bid' is a key transformation point.

Type – 9 Passive of Verbs Followed by Adjectives (Sensation/Quality)

Definition: When verbs of sensation or certain verbs are followed by an adjective describing the subject's quality, the passive construction typically involves a 'when' clause.

Grammar Rules:

1. **Form:** Subject + V (sensation/quality) + Adjective -> Subject + be-form + Adjective + When + it/they + be-form + V3 (of the sensation verb)

1. **Active:** Sugar tastes sweet.

Sugar **is sweet when it is tasted**.

2. **Active:** Wood feels hard.

Wood **is hard when it is felt**.

3. **Active:** The rose smells sweet.

The rose **is sweet when it is smelt**.

Note: This structure explains why the quality is perceived, rather than an action being performed on the subject.

Type – 10 Passive of Object Complement

Definition: When a sentence has an object and an object complement (a noun or adjective that describes or refers to the object), only the object becomes the subject of the passive sentence; the object complement remains after the verb.

Grammar Rules:

1. **One Object, One Complement:** Treat the object and its complement as a single entity for passive conversion.
 - **Active:** They elected him secretary. (Him = object; secretary = object complement, referring to 'him')
 - Passive:** He **was elected secretary**. (Not 'He was elected a secretary by them')
 - **Active:** We called him a fool. (Him = object; a fool = object complement)

Passive: He **was called a fool**.

Note: Avoid treating the object complement as a second object; it describes the direct object.

Type – 11 Passive of Universal Truths/General Statements (with 'People say...')

Definition: Converting general statements or universal truths, often introduced by 'people say' or 'they say', into passive voice.

Grammar Rules:

1. **Form 1: Impersonal Passive:** 'It is said that...'
 - **Active:** People say that honesty is the best policy.
 - Passive:** **It is said that** honesty is the best policy.
2. **Form 2: Personal Passive:** 'Subject + is said to + V1' (for current beliefs)
 - **Active:** People say that he is a good teacher.
 - **Passive:** He **is said to be** a good teacher.
 - **Expert Note:** This form is used when the subject of the reported speech can be made the subject of the passive sentence.