

The Active and Passive Voice

When do we use passive voice?

- When we are more interested in the action than the person who does the action.
- When it is not necessary to mention the doer of the action as it is clear who he is.
- When we don't know or have forgotten who did the action.

Eg: The teacher **explained** the lesson.

subject verb object



The lesson **was explained** by the teacher.

subject new structure preposition agent

Changes:

- 1) The object of the active becomes the subject in the passive.
- 2) The subject of the active becomes the agent in the passive; it is preceded by the preposition "by".
- 3) A new structure of the verb by putting the verb "to be" in the same tense as the active verb and adding the past participle of the active verb).

Active tenses and their equivalents:

Verb tense	Verb structure in passive voice	Active voice	Passive voice
Simple present	Is/are + past participle	Mary helps the boy	The boy is helped by Mary
Simple past	Was/were + past participle	Mary helped the boy	The boy was helped by Mary
Present continuous	Is/are + being + past participle	Mary is helping the boy	The boy is being helped by Mary
Past continuous	Was/were + being + past participle	Mary was helping the boy	The boy was being helped by Mary
Future simple	Shall/will be + past participle	Mary will help the boy	The boy will be helped by Mary
Present perfect	Have/has + been+ past participle	Mary has helped the boy	The boy has been helped by Mary
Past perfect	Had+ been+ past participle	Mary had helped the boy	The boy had been helped by Mary
Future perfect	Will have+ been + past participle	Mary will have helped the boy	The boy will have been helped by Mary
Perfect conditional	Would have been + past participle	Mary would have helped the boy	The boy would have been helped by Mary
Modals (can/could/may/might/shall/should/will/would/must/have to/has to/had to/ought to)	Modal + be + past participle	Mary should help the boy	The boy should be helped by Mary

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Verb +object+ infinitive	Was/were + past participle + infinitive	The teacher asked Mary to help the boy	Mary was asked to help the boy
Questions in the passive	The same verb structures cited above in a question form	-Why does Mary help the boy? - Was the student doing the activities?	-Why is the boy helped by Mary? - were the activities being done by the student?

Note:

1) No object no passive.

Eg: My father works in hospital
Subject verb

He is intelligent
subject verb

2) “by + agent” is omitted when it adds nothing to the meaning of the sentence.

Eg: Someone killed John Kennedy → John Kennedy was killed.
subject verb object subject verb

3) When dealing with materials we put “with” rather than “by”:

Eg: Clouds were covering the sky → The sky was being covered **with** clouds.

4) The subject pronoun in active voice becomes an object pronoun in passive voice:

Subject pronoun	Object pronoun
I	ME
SHE	HER
HE	HIM
IT	IT
WE	US
YOU	YOU
THEY	THEM

Activity 01: Rewrite the sentence « **b** » so that it means the same as sentence « **a** ».

a. Someone must teach that boy a lesson!.

b. _____

a. The police had arrested 12 people.

b. _____

a. They don't permit smoking here.

b. _____

a. They told the employees to leave the factory.

b. _____

a. People think that money is the most important thing in life.

b. _____

a. The builders will build one thousand new houses by the end of next year.

b. _____

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Activity 02: Rewrite the following sentences differently.

1. The instructions have been changed.

2. The test will be given at five o'clock this afternoon.

3. Lunch was being served when we arrived.

4. The new product design has been finished.

5. Lectures are recorded and posted on the internet.

6. Why were not they given a second chance?.

7. This novel can be read in two weeks.
