

Active & Passive voice

By

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Active & Passive voice

The active voice emphasizes the person or object performing the action.

The passive voice emphasizes the person or object receiving the action.



PASSIVE VOICE:
THE BOTTLE WAS RECYCLED BY JOE.

ACTIVE VOICE:
JOE RECYCLED THE BOTTLE.

The image on the right shows a man in a blue t-shirt with the word "VOLUNTEER" on it, holding a recycling bin. The bin has a blue recycling symbol on it.

Active voice

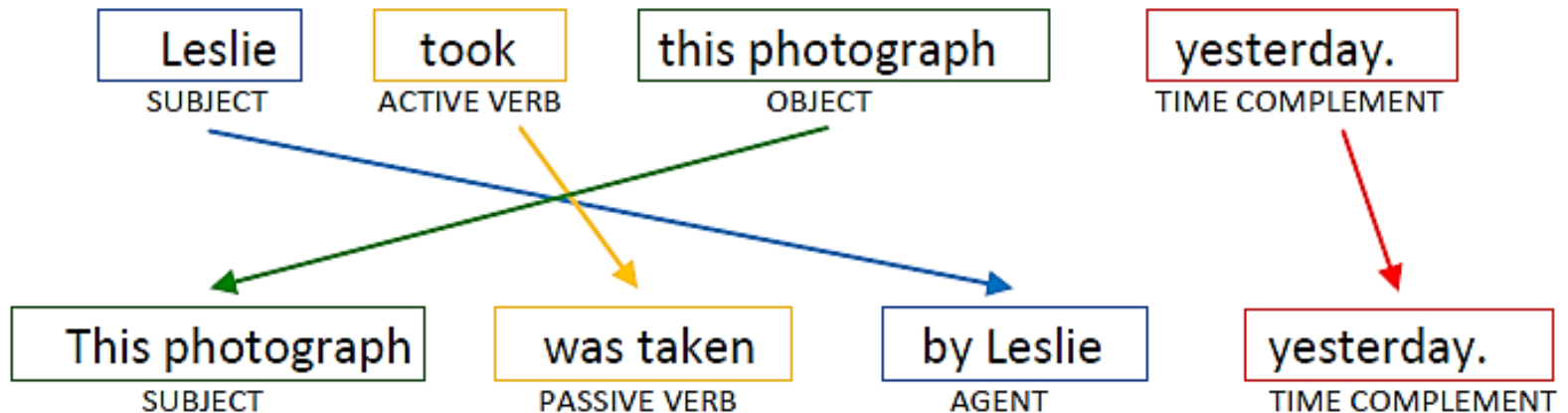
Active voice is that a sentence construction where a subject is followed by a verb and the object of action.

Subject + Verb + Object

Passive voice construction

Passive constructions are easy to spot. Look for a form of “to be” (is, are, am, was, were, has been, have been, had been, will be, will have been, being) followed by a past participle.

form of “to be” + past participle = passive voice



BY OR WITH?

In the passive voice, we use:

--- **by** with the **agent** to refer to by whom the action is being done.

The door was opened **by Mr Black**. (Mr Black = agent)

--- **with** to refer to the instrument, object or material that was used for something to be done.

The door was opened **with a key**. (a key = the object that was used)

The omelette was made **with eggs, cheese and peppers**. (eggs, cheese and peppers = the material that was used)

Active/Passive Verb Tenses

	ACTIVE VOICE	PASSIVE VOICE
Present Simple	<i>He delivers the letters.</i>	<i>The letters are delivered.</i>
Past Simple	<i>He delivered the letters.</i>	<i>The letters were delivered.</i>
Future Simple	<i>He will deliver the letters.</i>	<i>The letters will be delivered.</i>
Present Continuous	<i>He is delivering the letters.</i>	<i>The letters are being delivered.</i>
Past Continuous	<i>He was delivering the letters.</i>	<i>The letters were being delivered.</i>
Going to	<i>He is going to deliver the letters.</i>	<i>The letters are going to be delivered.</i>
Present Perfect	<i>He has delivered the letters.</i>	<i>The letters have been delivered.</i>
Past Perfect	<i>He had delivered the letters.</i>	<i>The letters had been delivered.</i>
Infinitive	<i>He has to deliver the letters.</i>	<i>The letters have to be delivered.</i>
Modals	<i>He must deliver the letters.</i>	<i>The letters must be delivered.</i>

When is it OK to use the passive?

1. To emphasize an object.

example: One hundred votes are required to pass the bill.

Active voice (“The bill requires 100 votes to pass”)

2. *To de-emphasize an unknown subject/actor.*

example: Over 120 different contaminants have been dumped into the river.

3. If your readers don't need to know who's responsible for the action.

example: The plants have been watered.

Passive Voice & Active voice in Academic Writing

In academic writing, passive voice is used to describe a process, the results of study, or similar material which is objective in nature. But, active voice is used to describe actions.



Active Voice in academic writing

Introduction and Discussion sections: The active voice is especially useful in the introduction and discussion sections of your manuscript, where you discuss previous research and then introduce your own.

Example:

Previous studies have investigated contact behaviors resulting from dynamic loading.

In this study, we investigated the effect of stiffness on contact behavior.

Note how using the active voice in the second sentence helps the reader make a clear mental transition from previous studies to the present study.

Literature review: The literature review section often seeks to explain the most important contributions in the field, which makes actors/agents/authors important.

Example: Nobre et al. (1997) studied the surface resistance characteristics of ductile steel to impact indentation by hard alumina balls.

Passive Voice in academic writing

Methods section: The passive voice is often preferred in the Materials and Methods section where the steps taken are more important than the doer or actor.

Example:

Active: We obtained the velocity contour lines from CFD simulations.

Passive: The velocity contour lines were obtained from CFD simulations.

In this case, it is more important **to emphasize what was done** rather than who did it; therefore, the passive voice is preferable here.

Results section: The passive voice is also preferable when describing the results of a study as the presentation of results calls for objectivity.

Active: We observed an inverse relationship between the pressure ratio and exergy loss in the combustion chamber.

Passive: An inverse relationship was observed between the pressure ratio and exergy loss in the combustion chamber.

Note that in the examples above, the passive construction seems a better choice because the statement indicates that these results hold true regardless of the doer of the experiment.

NOTE!

Both the active and passive voices can be appropriate choices in scientific/academic writing. It is important to consider **what you are trying to emphasize** in a particular sentence or section of your paper.

Think about what information the target reader is looking for, and choose the active voice or the passive voice, whichever will make the text most clear and comprehensible.

Homework!

Convert these passive voice sentences into the active voice:

1-The process, which was essential for the experiment's success, was completed by Enzo.

2-The butter is kept in the fridge.

3-Alana's toes were crushed by the garage door.

4-The book wants to be kept.

5-The cake that I worked on all day long is being eaten by Justin.

6- A tube is filled with water s

7- If you told me, your secret would be kept.

8- A letter is written.

9- A camera is bought by her.

10- He is known to me



Homework!

Choose the sentences written incorrectly in the passive voice.

- 1) I was eaten an ice cream.
- 2) The song was sung by a singer.
- 3) The concert was finished at 12 p.m.
- 4) He was written a novel.
- 5) He was treated kindly.

