

PART 5

Passive Voice

INTRODUCTION TO PART 5

The term "voice" refers to the relationship between the verb (or action) and the subject of a sentence. In an **active voice** sentence, we place the subject before the verb because we want to emphasize who or what performs the action. We want to emphasize the doer of the action.

In a **passive voice** sentence, we want to emphasize the action, what happened, rather than who or what performs the action. In the passive voice sentence, the subject (doer) of the active voice sentence is placed after the verb or is omitted entirely.

Active voice: *The mechanic discovered the problem.*

Passive voice: *The problem was discovered by the mechanic.*

Active voice: *The mechanic repaired the brakes.*

Passive voice: *The brakes were repaired.*

Because the doer in a passive voice sentence is often not mentioned, a passive sentence often sounds impersonal and objective.

The passive voice is frequently used in written English. It is often found in textbooks, in scientific, business, technical and government reports, and in newspapers.

A sentence in the active voice is usually preferable to a sentence in the passive voice because an active voice sentence is shorter, stronger, and more direct.

LESSON ELEVEN

11-1 FORMING THE PASSIVE

■ Simple Present ■

Active: *Many older citizens use the library.*

Passive: *The library is used by many older citizens.*

Active: *Do many older citizens use the library?*

Passive: *Is the library used by many older citizens?*

■ Simple Past ■

Active: *Many children used the library last summer.*

Passive: *The library was used by many children last summer.*

Active: *Did many children use the library last summer?*

Passive: *Was the library used by many children last summer?*

■ Present Continuous ■

Active: *Workmen are painting the third floor.*

Passive: *The third floor is being painted.*

Active: *Are workmen painting the third floor?*

Passive: *Is the third floor being painted?*

■ Past Continuous ■

Active: *Last week, they were painting the children's room.*

Passive: *Last week, the children's room was being painted.*

Active: *Were they painting the children's room last week?*

Passive: *Was the children's room being painted last week?*

4. I have a little cousin. He also has poor behavior in school.

5. We hope this. He will grow up to be another Einstein.

6. His parents have always been certain of this. He has a high IQ.

■ Future with will ■

Active: *The library will offer many new programs next year.*

Passive: *Many new programs will be offered next year.*

Active: *Will the library offer many new programs next year?*

Passive: *Will many new programs be offered next year?*

■ Future with be going to ■

Active: *A local author is going to organize a children's story hour.*

Passive: *A children's story hour is going to be organized by a local author.*

Active: *Is a local author going to organize a children's story hour?*

Passive: *Is a children's story hour going to be organized?*

■ Present Perfect ■

Active: *The director has ordered a lot of new equipment.*

Passive: *A lot of new equipment has been ordered.*

Active: *Has the director ordered a lot of new equipment?*

Passive: *Has a lot of new equipment been ordered?*

■ Past Perfect ■

Active: *Workmen had already installed the new computer when I was there last week.*

Passive: *The new computer had already been installed when I was there last week.*

Active: *Had workmen already installed the new computer when you were there last week?*

Passive: *Had the new computer already been installed when you were there last week?*

■ Future Perfect ■

Active: *The library will have started the children's story hour by the end of next month.*

Passive: *The children's story hour will have been started by the end of next month.*

Active: *Will the library have started the children's story hour by the end of next month?*

Passive: *Will the children's story hour have been started by the end of next month?*

■ Present Infinitive ■

Active: *I have to renew my library card.*

Passive: *My library card has to be renewed.*

Active: *Do you have to renew your library card?*

Passive: *Does your library card have to be renewed?*

■ Modals ■

Active: *You should return the book before June 1st.*

Passive: *The book should be returned before June 1st.*

Active: *Should I return the book before June 1st?*

Passive: *Should the book be returned before June 1st?*

Active: *You should have returned the book last week.*

Passive: *The book should have been returned last week.*

Active: *Should I have returned the book last week?*

Passive: *Should the book have been returned last week?*

1. The passive is formed with a form of *be* + the past participle. Note the form of *be* for continuous tenses.

The third floor is being painted.

Last week, the children's room was being painted.

Note the form of *be* for perfect tenses.

A lot of new equipment has been ordered.

The new computer had already been installed when I was there last week.

2. To make a verb in the passive voice negative, *not* is placed after the first auxiliary.

The second floor is not being painted.

The book should not be returned after June 1st.

3. Not every verb can be changed into the passive voice. Only transitive verbs (verbs that have an object) can be changed. Intransitive verbs (verbs that do not have an object) cannot be changed into the passive voice. For example, these sentences cannot be written in the passive voice because the verbs are intransitive.

She seems tired.

The dog disappeared.

Verbs followed by reflexive pronouns also cannot be changed to the passive voice, as in *She picked herself up.*

4. The present perfect continuous, past perfect continuous, future continuous, and future perfect continuous tenses are not used in the passive voice.
5. When a transitive verb + preposition is put into the passive voice, the preposition remains immediately after the verb.

Active: *We must put out the fire.*

Passive: *The fire must be put out.*

Active: *The thief locked us in the closet.*

Passive: *We were locked in the closet.*

Exercise 1

Rapidly change the following active verbs to their passive forms. Do this exercise orally.

Examples: do is done

did was done

is doing is being done

- | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. tell | 11. should write | 21. is fixing |
| 2. is telling | 12. to write | 22. will finish |
| 3. told | 13. will write | 23. sent |
| 4. was telling | 14. had written | 24. is giving |
| 5. has told | 15. has written | 25. does |
| 6. had told | 16. was writing | 26. has seen |
| 7. will tell | 17. wrote | 27. was correcting |
| 8. to tell | 18. is writing | 28. is taking |
| 9. will have told | 19. writes | 29. will have finished |
| 10. must tell | 20. will have written | 30. is going to fix |

Exercise 2

Complete each sentence, using the correct passive form of the verbs in parentheses. Then work with another student and decide if the sentence is true or false.

- Coffee (grow) _____ in France.
- Dynamite (invent) _____ by Alfred Nobel, the man who was responsible for setting up the Nobel Peace Prize.
- A cure for cancer (not find) _____.
- A photograph of me and my classmates (take) _____ at the end of this course.
- The classroom (not clean) _____ when students started arriving for class today.
- Different actions (take) _____ these days to help deal with environmental problems.

7. Baseball (not play) _____ all over the world.
8. Computers (use) _____ more and more in the future.
9. A movie (not make) _____ in Hollywood right now.
10. A woman (elect) _____ president of the United States in the past.

Exercise 3

Read the newspaper article. With another student, decide on an appropriate headline for the article. Then underline the verbs that can be changed into the passive voice. Finally, rewrite the paragraph, using the passive voice where possible.

Something strange happened this past Sunday in Fairville. Numerous residents of the Pleasant Park area spotted a moose in gardens and on local streets. This was very unusual because people had never seen a moose in the town before. The sight must have really shocked Alice Meara, the owner of Serendipity Cards. At the sight of the moose in front of her store, she fell off the ladder on which she had been standing. After nearly two hours of excitement all over the area, the police, with the help of workers from the local zoo, caught the young male moose. It is now resting comfortably at the zoo. However, zoo officials will release it into the woods by the end of next week. As for Alice Meara, she's home in bed with an arm and a leg in casts. She broke both in the fall.



11-2 USING THE PASSIVE

1. The passive voice is used in English in specific instances.
 - a. When it is more interesting or important to emphasize *what happened* rather than who or what performed the action.

There was a terrible storm last night. Hundreds of houses were destroyed.

- b. When the *doer* of the action is unknown. The subjects of such sentences in the active voice are words such as *they, people, someone, somebody, etc.*

Someone stole my car last night. My car was stolen last night.

- c. When the *doer* of the action is known, but the speaker or writer does not want to name the person who made a statement or did something wrong.

The teacher ruined the top of this desk accidentally.

The top of this desk was ruined accidentally.

- d. When the *doers* of the action represent a large group of different individuals.

A lot of coffee is grown in Brazil.

- e. When the *doer* of the action is obvious.

The letter will be picked up after 1:00. (by the mailman)

Our tests have already been corrected. (by the teacher)

2. The *by*-phrase is used only when it is important to know who performed the action.

Romeo and Juliet was written by William Shakespeare.

Often, *by* is used in an early statement but not in the statements that follow because the *doer* of the action has already been mentioned and is, therefore, obvious.

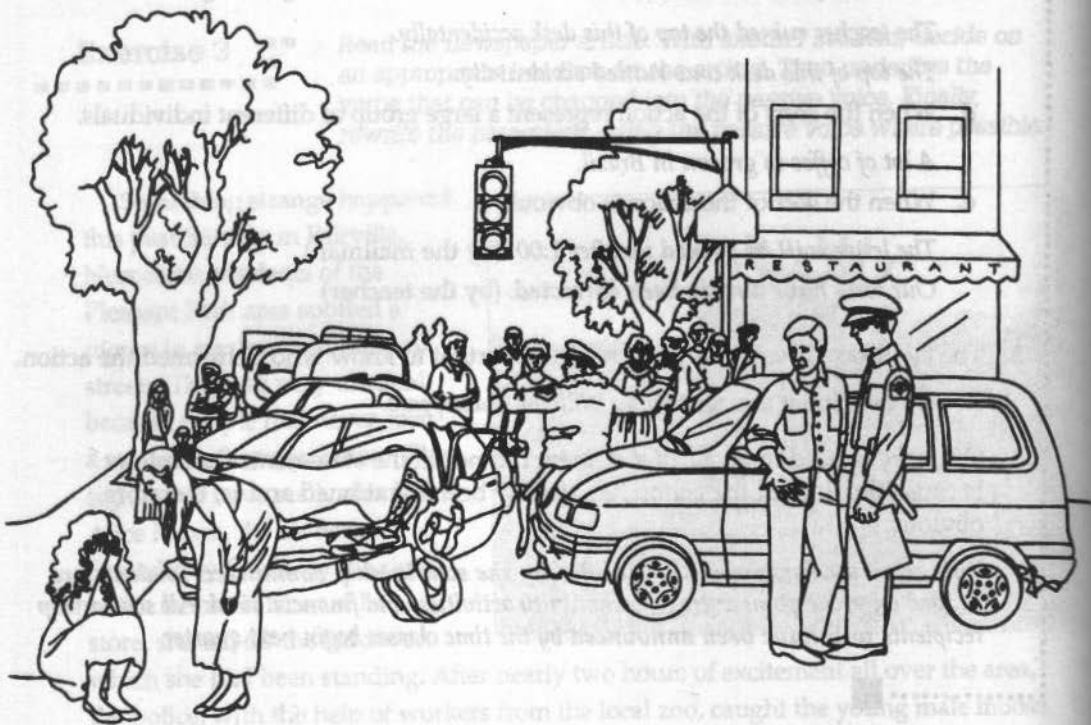
Who gets a scholarship will be decided by the scholarship committee. Students are judged on grade point average, community activities, and financial need. All scholarship recipients will have been announced by the time classes begin next quarter.

Exercise 4 ■■■ Change the sentences to the passive voice. Use *by* where necessary.

1. A hurricane destroyed the small town.
2. The hurricane has left many people homeless.
3. The Red Cross is feeding the homeless victims.
4. The president is going to sign an emergency relief bill.
5. The citizens of the town have already organized cleanup crews.
6. Someone broke the pay phone on the third floor of the dormitory.
7. The dorm director had to notify the phone company immediately.
8. I hope the phone company will repair it soon.
9. The students on both the second and the third floors use it.
10. Phone company officials were interviewing all the students last night.

Exercise 5

With another student, write ten sentences to describe the accident scene in the picture below. Think about the immediate past, the present, and the future. Use the passive voice in as many sentences as possible.



11-3 INDIRECT OBJECTS AND DIRECT OBJECTS AS PASSIVE SUBJECTS

1. Some sentences contain both a direct and an indirect object. Either the indirect or the direct object can become the subject of the passive sentence.

Someone gave him a lot of money.

He was given a lot of money. (indirect object as subject)

A lot of money was given to him. (direct object as subject)

2. When the direct object becomes the subject of the passive sentence, the sentence may need a preposition to make the sentence sound more natural.

The salesclerk gave me a pen.

A pen was given to me by the salesclerk.

The waiter found us a table.
A table was found for us by the waiter.

3. Remember that a noun clause may be the direct object of a sentence. The rules for changing the verb forms are the same. However, while the introductory verb that introduces the noun clause must be changed, the verb in the noun clause may be changed, or it may remain in the active voice.

Active: *Everyone applauded what Bob said.*

Passive: *What Bob said was applauded by everyone.*

OR

What was said by Bob was applauded by everyone.

Exercise 6 ■■■ Change the sentences to the passive voice in two ways.

Example: The teacher gave Ann a perfect score on her composition.

Ann was given a perfect score on her composition.

A perfect score was given to Ann on her composition.

1. A local art club recently awarded Steve a four-year scholarship to study art.

2. Many different organizations have presented him awards for his artistic ability.

3. Steve will give a group of children art lessons next week.

4. The children's parents are paying him a lot of money.

5. They have already sent him their checks.

6. Steve is going to provide the children the necessary supplies.

7. Several department stores have offered him jobs.

8. Undoubtedly, some company will offer him a good job after graduation from art school.

Exercise 7

Change the sentences to the passive voice. Use *by* where necessary. Remember to keep all modifiers next to the word they modify.

Example: The police are going to question the two people who were near the building at the time of the robbery.

The two people who were near the building at the time of the robbery are going to be questioned by the police.

- The police have caught the man who broke into the office last night.
- The thief had completely destroyed some very important files.
- They are holding him in the city jail until he can contact his lawyer.
- They are going to schedule his trial for next month.
- Officer Smith, chief of security, is studying the report of the break-in.
- Because of the incident, the president of the company canceled the stockholder's meeting.
- His secretary will send notices of the next meeting to everyone.
- She typed the notices yesterday afternoon.
- The company's security force is currently revising all security procedures.
- The force is holding its meeting in Room 432 at the moment.
- The chief of security was making some recommendations a few minutes ago.
- By the end of the week, they will have revised all security procedures.
- Since last year, people have burglarized the building five times.

14. Two months ago, someone locked a secretary, who had been working late, in a closet for eight hours.
15. They must maintain the safety of the employees working in the building.
16. The security force will present the new plan before the end of next week.

Exercise 8

Complete each dialog, using a question in the passive voice.
Use by where necessary.

Example: A: A hospital orderly took Joanne down to the operating room.

B: When was Joanne taken down to the operating room?

A: About two hours ago.

1. A: One of the hospital's top surgeons is operating on Joanne at the moment.
B: _____?
A: Because she's had problems with her right knee ever since her skiing accident.
2. A: The hospital will send her husband the bill.
B: _____?
A: Next week.
3. A: Fortunately, their insurance company is going to pay part of the bill.
B: _____?
A: 70 percent.
4. A: The hospital admits visitors each evening.
B: _____?
A: From seven to nine.
5. A: However, you must notify the receptionist of your visit.
B: _____?
A: Because the hospital doesn't want too many people in a room at once.
6. A: Last night, Joanne had a slight fever, so the nurse had to take her temperature.
B: _____?
A: Every hour.
7. A: Someone was paging Joanne's surgeon. I hope everything is all right.
B: _____?
A: A few minutes ago.
8. A: The doctor will have released Joanne from the hospital by then.
B: _____?
A: By the time her parents arrive in Denver.

9. A: The hospital staff has provided Joanne with excellent care.
 B: _____?
 A: Since she arrived.
10. A: Joanne's husband had already packed when the doctor signed Joanne's release papers.
 B: _____?
 A: Her clothes.

Exercise 9 ■ ■ ■ *Make yes/no questions in the passive voice, using the given words.*

Example: public transportation / use / a lot

A: Is public transportation used a lot?

B: No, unfortunately, a lot of people don't use public transportation.

1. more than twenty accidents / report / by 10:00 last night

A: _____?

B: No, by that time motorists had reported more than thirty.

2. all accident reports / record

A: _____?

B: No, the police are recording only the most serious ones.

3. many tickets / give out

A: _____?

B: No, the police haven't given out many tickets.

4. more than 350 tickets / write / last year

A: _____?

B: No, the police wrote more than 500 tickets.

5. you / give / a ticket / when / I / see / you / last night

A: _____?

B: No, the police officer was giving me a warning, not a ticket.

6. your driver's license / suspend / for thirty days last year

A: _____?

B: No, the judge suspended it for only ten days.

7. every accident / report

A: _____?

B: No, not all accidents are reported, only some.

8. many innocent people / kill / intoxicated drivers this year

A: _____?

B: One never knows, but it is hoped they won't.

9. careless drivers / punish / severely

A: _____?

B: Well, we hope the police are going to punish them severely.

10. good drivers / find

A: _____?

B: Of course you can find good drivers.

Exercise 10 ■■

Find the ten mistakes in the article, which appeared in a college newspaper. Then correct the mistakes. There are no mistakes in tense.

Library Vacancy

Many students are used the university library every day, but few who are being sat in its hundreds of chairs at this very moment are aware of what's been going on there lately. It has been learned that the director recently fired. However, the reason for his dismissal is concealing by the university. Since the director employed at the library for over twenty years, there is speculation that something scandalous has been happened. Rumors of every kind can hear behind closed doors.

It is not yet clear if another director has found. If not, one can only wonder whether the administration will finally hire a woman for a top position at this university. Surely, there are many highly qualified women who could interview, yet in view of this university's past hiring practices we can't help but be suspicious that the administration will be continued its discriminatory policy of filling all high positions with men only.

Exercise 11 ■■

Decide which of the sentences should be used in the passive voice and which should remain in the active voice. Then write the sentences in the form of a paragraph. Remember not to overuse the passive voice. You should always have a specific reason for using it.

1. This is Ed Scott, your reporter for the 6:00 news.

2. I'm at the airport waiting for the Denver Broncos football team to arrive.

3. Hundreds of fans meet the team's plane every time it returns to Denver.
4. Everyone knows that the fans in Denver are the most enthusiastic in the country.
5. Some T.V. sportscasters have even called them fanatics.
6. An unusually large number of people greeted the Broncos last weekend.
7. I see that their plane has just landed.
8. The police are pushing the crowd back.
9. Somebody has just lost a little boy in this mass of people.
10. I can hear his parents calling his name.
11. In the past, the pushing and shoving has hurt many people.
12. These fans must learn the rules of politeness and safety.
13. The Broncos have just gotten off their plane, and they're entering the airport now.
14. The ecstatic fans are shouting their congratulations.
15. The Broncos, as you know, defeated the mighty Dallas Cowboys last night.
16. They will play the championship team at Oakland next week.
17. After that important game, undoubtedly thousands will crowd the airport.

Exercise 12 ■ ■

Combine the sentences into one paragraph, using the passive voice where appropriate. Use the methods of coordination and subordination when you can, but do not overconnect. The accident scene is pictured on page 184.

Situation: Rita is in a phone booth. She's speaking to a friend and describing an accident she has just seen.

1. An accident happened just a few minutes ago.
2. A speeding minivan ran into a car.
3. The car was going though the intersection.
4. A large crowd is now standing around the car and the minivan.
5. A very tall police officer is inspecting the minivan driver's papers.
6. A short police officer is ordering the crowd to stand back.
7. A passer-by is talking to one of the drivers.
8. It seems that the collision hasn't injured either driver.
9. The collision didn't badly damage the minivan, but it totaled the car.
10. I know that the officers are going to question the driver of the minivan.
11. I can see that the driver is extremely nervous.
12. The officers have asked a few people if they would testify in court.
13. About ten people witnessed the accident.
14. The accident has backed up traffic.

15. A tow truck will eventually tow both vehicles away.
16. Now the driver of the minivan is getting into the police car.
17. The short officer is locking the driver's doors.
18. They are probably going to take the driver to the police station.
19. They are undoubtedly going to give him a breathalyzer test.
20. The state legislature should pass stricter laws to punish careless drivers.

Practice Exam

Write about a true event in your life. Use the passive voice when you think it is appropriate. Use as a model these paragraphs, which were written during the winter quarter of 1993.

On my wedding day, we had a small party at which our parents, relatives, and some of our friends were present and from whom we received many presents. After the marriage ceremony, my husband and I decided to leave on our honeymoon to London. The tickets had been bought for us by his parents; moreover, the journey had been arranged very well by my husband's friend, who drove us to the airport.

We took the airplane from Cairo to London. When we got on the plane, we were directed to our seats by a flight attendant, and as the plane was ready to take off, all the passengers were asked to fasten their seat belts and to stop smoking. Furthermore, we were given some advice on what to do in case of an emergency. After that we were served a delicious cocktail and shown a funny movie about teenagers on a bike tour. Later on, dinner was served to all the passengers while newspapers and magazines were being distributed.

When the plane landed, we were met by one of my husband's friends, who drove us to a very nice hotel. Although we stayed in London for only ten days, we had a wonderful time, and we felt as if we had just bought the whole world; hence, we still remember those days. We returned home to our new home, parents, and friends, hoping to live happily forever.

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