

## Active and Passive Voice

There are two special forms for verbs called voice:

1. Active voice
2. Passive voice

The **active voice** is the "normal" voice. This is the voice that we use most of the time. You are probably already familiar with the active voice. In the active voice, the **object** receives the action of the verb:

**Ex:** Cats eat fish

The **passive voice** is less usual. In the passive voice, the **subject** receives the action of the verb:

**Ex:** Fish are eaten by cats

**Look at the following sentences:**

Sunanda wrote a novel.

A novel was written by Sunanda.

In the first sentence the subject, Sunanda, performs the action and the verb wrote, is said to be in the active voice. In the second sentence the subject is a novel, and the verb, 'was written' is said to be in the passive voice.

A verb is in the active voice when it tells what the subject does;

It is in the passive voice when it tells what the subject suffers.

We know that only a verb used transitively can take an object; therefore, only a transitive verb has two voices, the active and the passive. A verb that has an object of its own is called transitive verb and if it has two, it is then known as ditransitive. So it is sometimes possible for two passive forms of a ditransitive verb.

**Ex:** I sent her a message. (AV)

A message was sent (to) her by me or she was sent a message by me (PV)

The object of the active verb becomes the subject of the passive verb:

	<b>Subject</b>	<b>verb</b>	<b>object</b>
<b>Active</b>	Everybody	drinks	water.
<b>Passive</b>	Water	is drunk	by everybody.

- 1) The passive voice is formed by putting the verb 'to be' into the appropriate tense and adding the past participle (V3 - the third form of a finite verb)

<b>Tense</b>	<b>Active voice</b>	<b>Passive Voice</b>
Simple present	I keep	I am kept
Present continuous	I am keeping	I am being kept
Simple Past	I kept	I was kept
Past Continuous	I was keeping	I was being kept
Present Perfect	I have kept	I have been kept
Past Perfect	I had kept	I had been kept
Simple Future	I shall keep	I shall be kept

- 2) Study the following sentences:

**Active**

Farmers grow crops.  
He explained the lesson.  
Cats kill rats

**Passive**

Crops are grown by farmers.  
The lesson was explained by him.  
Rats are killed by cats.

We notice that when a sentence is changed from active to Passive, the object of the active voice becomes the subject of the passive.

- 3) Let us examine the following sentences:

**Active**

Shaw wrote this play.  
The postman is collecting letters.

**Passive**

This play was written by Shaw.  
Letters are being collected by the postman.

We see that in the passive voice the agent, when mentioned, is preceded, by the preposition 'by'.

- 4) Let us look at the following:

**Active**

People always admire this picture.  
Someone has stolen my books.  
People speak English all over the world.

**Passive**

This picture is always admired.  
My books have been stolen.  
English is spoken all over the world.

We notice that when the subject in the active voice is vague or unknown, it remains unexpressed in the passive voice.

5) Study the following sentences:

**Active**

1) Krishna gave me a book

2) Who taught you English?

**Passive**

a) I was given a book by Krishna

b) A book was given (to) me by Krishna

a) By who were you taught English?

b) By whom was English taught to you?

We notice that when a verb in the active voice has an indirect as well as a direct object, either of them can become the subject of the passive voice. But it is more usual in English to make the personal (indirect) object the subject of the passive voice.

6) When we wish to turn an imperative, active into the passive, we have to make use of a paraphrase, using the verb let:

**Active**

Tell him to go.

Saddle the horse.

Dispatch the letter.

**Passive**

Let him be told to go.

Let the horse be saddled.

Let the letter be dispatched.

## Uses of the Passive Voice

**The passive construction is used:**

1) If the active subject is not known, so that an active construction is impossible :

**Ex:** My purse has been stolen (I do not know by whom).

She was tempted to buy.

The plane was lost somewhere in the hills.

2) When the subject in the active voice is unmistakably clear from the context:

**Ex:** He was sent to prison for three years (by the judge).

She was dismissed (by her mistress). Mistakes are always committed.

3) If we do not want to mention the active subject, we then use the impersonal passive construction, with 'It' as the subject of the passive verb.

**Ex:** It is said that there will be a great crowd (somebody said so)

It is believed that the prisoner is not guilty (believed by people in general).

It is rumored that the government proposes to introduce tax on agricultural income (some people have spread the rumour).

It is feared that there are no survivors.

4) If we take a great interest in the sufferer than in the doer of the action:

**Ex:** Mary was punished by her father.

The ship was wrecked in a storm.

### **Convert the following sentences from Active Voice into Passive Voice**

#### **I. Present Tense:**

- 1) Sadiq repairs the radio.
- 2) Sneha writes novels.
- 3) John teaches us English.
- 4) We accept good news.
- 5) They sell radios.

#### **II. Present Continuous Tense:**

- 1) Sarita is singing a song.
- 2) The boys are making kites.
- 3) Rajitha is taking the dog for a walk.
- 4) The students are watching a dance programme.
- 5) The government is building houses for the poor.

#### **III. Present Perfect:**

- 1) The woodcutter has cut the tree.
- 2) R.K. Narayan has written many novels.
- 3) The children have burst the balloons.
- 4) Anuradha has painted these pictures.
- 5) Rajini has given me a present.

#### **IV. Past Tense:**

- 1) She broke the glass.
- 2) He built two houses.
- 3) Pratap took some photographs.
- 4) The cat killed the mouse.
- 5) His teacher praised him.

#### **V. Past Continuous Tense:**

- 1) Pratima was singing a song.
- 2) The carpenters were making chairs.
- 3) The lion was chasing the deer.
- 4) The teacher was teaching the children.
- 5) Sohail was writing a letter to his father.

#### **VI. Past Perfect Tense:**

- 1) He had sent the parcel.

- 2) Jim Corbett had killed many tigers.
- 3) The fishermen had caught many fish.
- 4) Kamala had finished the work.
- 5) The seawater had damaged some of the cargo.

**VII. Future Tense:**

- 1) I shall punish you.
- 2) He will send the tickets tomorrow.
- 3) He will give you the instructions.
- 4) They will look into your case.
- 5) They will finish the work in a week.

**VIII. Future Perfect Tense:**

- 1) They will have completed the work by tomorrow.
- 2) By next year, they will have constructed the house.
- 3) They will have written a few books on this subject by next year.
- 4) They will have planted saplings in the fields by the time we return.
- 5) I shall have finished my homework by the time you wake up.

**IX. Interrogative Sentences:**

- 1) Does he play cricket?
- 2) Has he invited you to dinner?
- 3) Where did he find the pen?
- 4) Can he lift this box?
- 5) Who wrote the Gitanjali?

**X. Imperative Sentences:**

- 1) Tell her to wait here.
- 2) Close all the gates at once.
- 3) Help the poor.
- 4) Kindly grant me a week's leave.
- 5) Let him finish the job now.

**XI. Turn the following sentences from the Active Voice to Passive Voice.**

- 1) Who wrote this poem?
- 2) They chose him their leader.
- 3) Thieves broke into the house.
- 4) People believe that dreams come true.
- 5) When will they finish the work?
- 6) Can they solve the problem?
- 7) She requested him to give her some money.
- 8) Take your medicine on time.
- 9) The news alarmed us.

- 10) We elected him Chairman.
- 11) They kept me waiting.
- 12) He gave her a ring.
- 13) Watt invented the steam engine.
- 14) One finds horses everywhere.
- 15) The manager will give you a ticket.
- 16) Declare the result.
- 17) Please help the poor man.
- 18) Why has he punished the innocent boy?
- 19) You must work for success.
- 20) The judge found him guilty of murder.

### Answers

#### I. Present Tense:

- 1) The radio is repaired by Sadiq.
- 2) Novels are written by Sneha.
- 3) English is taught to us by John/ We are taught English by John.
- 4) Good news is expected (by us).
- 5) Radios are sold by them.

#### II. Present Continuous Tense:

- 1) A song is being sung by Sarita.
- 2) Kites are being made by the boys.
- 3) The dog is being taken for a walk by Rajitha.
- 4) A dance programme is being watched by the students.
- 5) Houses are being built by the government for the poor.

#### III. Present Perfect:

- 1) The tree has been cut by the woodcutter.
- 2) Many novels have been written by R.K. Narayan.
- 3) The balloons have been burst by the children.
- 4) These pictures have been painted by Anuradha.
- 5) A present has been given to me by Rajini/J have been given a present by Rajini.

#### IV. Past Tense:

- 1) The glass was broken by her.
- 2) Two houses were built by him.
- 3) Some photographs were taken by Pratap.
- 4) The mouse was killed by the cat.
- 5) He was praised by his teacher.

**V. Past Continuous Tense:**

- 1) A song was being sung by Pratima.
- 2) Chairs were being made by the carpenters.
- 3) The deer was being chased by the lion.
- 4) The children were being taught by the teacher.
- 5) A letter was being written by Sohail to his father.

**VI. Past Perfect Tense:**

- 1) The parcel had been sent by him.
- 2) Many tigers had been killed by Jim Corbett.
- 3) Many fish had been caught by the fisherman.
- 4) The work had been finished by Kamala.
- 5) Some of the cargo had been damaged by the seawater.

**VII. Future Tense:**

- 1) You will be punished by me.
- 2) The tickets will be sent by him tomorrow.
- 3) The instructions will be given to you by him/You will be given the instructions by him.
- 4) Your case will be looked into. (by them)
- 5) The work will be finished in a week. (by them)

**VIII. Future Perfect Tense:**

- 1) The work will have been completed by them by tomorrow.
- 2) The house will have been constructed by them by next year.
- 3) A few books on this subject will have been written by them by next year.
- 4) Saplings will have been planted in the fields by them by the time we return.
- 5) My homework will have been finished by me by the time you wake up.

**IX. Interrogative Sentences:**

- 1) Is cricket played by him?
- 2) Have you been invited to dinner by him?
- 3) Where was the pen found by him?
- 4) Can this box be lifted by him?
- 5) By whom was the Gitanjali written?

**X. Imperative Sentences:**

- 1) He told let her wait here.
- 2) Let all the gates be closed at once.
- 3) Let the poor be helped.
- 4) You are requested to grant me a week's leave.
- 5) Let the job be finished by him now.



**XI. Passive Forms:**

- 1) By whom was this poem written?
- 2) He was chosen their leader.
- 3) The house was broken into. (by thieves)
- 4) It is believed that dreams come true. (by people)
- 5) When will the work be finished?
- 6) Can the problem be solved?
- 7) He was requested to give her some money.
- 8) Medicine must be taken on time.
- 9) We were alarmed by the news.
- 10) He was elected Chairman. (by them)
- 11) I was kept waiting. (by them)
- 12) She was given a ring by him/A ring was given to her by him.
- 13) The steam engine was invented by Watt.
- 14) Horses are found everywhere.
- 15) You will be given ticket by the manager/A ticket will be given to you by the manager.
- 16) Let the result be declared.
- 17) You are requested to help the poor man.
- 18) Why has the innocent boy been punished by him?
- 19) Success must be worked for.
- 20) He was found guilty of murder. (By the judge)