

The Passive Voice

A sentence in the *active voice* is formed with subject + verb + object.

Eg. *The man* (subject) *cleans* (verb) *the windows* (object) *every month*.

The *passive voice* is formed by putting the *object* at the start of the sentence.

Eg. *The windows are cleaned by the man every month*.

The structure of the passive voice is object + verb to be + past participle.

Eg. *Bikes are often stolen*. – *Bikes* (object) *are* (verb to be) *often stolen* (past participle).

Note that it is not always necessary to have a subject in a passive voice sentence.



 1. Change the active voice sentences into passive voice sentences. Remove the subject from the sentences.

a) He checks the systems for viruses once a month.

.....E.g. *The system is checked for viruses once a month*.....

b) People make this wine in France.

This wine is made in France.

c) The mailman delivers the letters every day at 10am.

The letters are delivered every day at 10am.

d) My employer pays my salary every month.

My salary is paid every month.

e) The machine bakes the bread quickly and efficiently.

The bread is baked quickly and efficiently.

f) Her father gives her pocket money every Saturday.

She is given pocket money every Saturday.

The examples on the previous page are all in the present simple tense, and therefore the verb “to be” is always either “is” or “are.” The verb “to be” changes in every tense, and therefore must change in passive voice depending on what tense is being used.

Eg. *Michael Bay directed the movie.* (active voice, past simple)

The movie was directed by Michael Bay. (passive voice, past simple)

The verb to be changes to either “was” or “were.” See below for a list of examples of passive voice in the most common tenses.

Tense	Active Voice	Passive Voice
Present Simple	He checks the passports.	The passports are checked.
Present Continuous	He is checking the passports.	The passports are being checked.
Past Simple	He checked the passports.	The passports were checked.
Present Perfect	He has checked the passports.	The passports have been checked.
Future Simple	He will check the passports.	The passports will be checked.
Going to future	He is going to check the passports.	The passports are going to be checked.
Modal Verbs	He has to check the passports.	The passports have to be checked.

 **2. Change the sentences into the passive voice. Use the table above as a reference.**

a) The builders will finish the highway next year.

The highway will be finished next year.

b) Bombs destroyed the bridge.

The bridge was destroyed.

c) You must keep this door closed at all times.

This door must be kept closed at all times.

d) The paramedics have taken him to hospital.

He has been taken to hospital.

e) The marketing team tests the concept on a focus group.

The concept is tested on a focus group.

f) The president might lower taxes.

Taxes might be lowered.

g) The police are going to arrest him.

He is going to be arrested.

h) Marcellus Edson invented peanut butter.

Peanut butter was invented by Marcellus Edson

Passive voice can often be used to sound more objective and less emotional.

Eg. *I've told you multiple times not to do that.* (active voice, more emotional)

You've been told multiple times not to do that. (passive voice, more objective)

In professional situations, this can make a big difference.



3. Carlos Morales is a team leader. He has had repeated problems with one of his staff members. After a particularly bad argument with her, Carlos decides to write his boss an email about the problem. Unfortunately, the email Carlos writes seems angry and unprofessional. Re-write the numbered sentences in the passive voice and discuss how the tone of the e-mail is changed.

TITLE * | I can't take it anymore!!!

Personal Shared

Required

SUB

B *I* U ¶ 🔥 A T ↻ 📷 📎 ☰ ☷ ☹ ☺ ↺ ↻ </>

Hello Mr. Robinson,

I'm writing to you about one of my team members, Lizzy Monroe. She has been late to work almost every day this month. I've given her 3 different warnings (a), but she continues to come in late. Me and the other team leaders told her on multiple occasions (b) that being late this often is unacceptable. I informed her on Friday (c) that if she is late one more time, I will fire her (d). And two hours later, she took an extra long lunch break! On top of that, she is a very slow worker, and I'm almost certain that she will not finish her report (e) by the July deadline. I feel like at this point, I have to do something (f) to show the other team members that this type of behaviour will not be tolerated.

Regards, Carlos Morales

- a) *She has been given 3 different warnings.*
- b) *She was told on multiple occasions*
- c) *She was told on Friday*
- d) *She will be fired*
- e) *her report will not be finished*
- f) *something has to be done*



4. How do you think the passive voice changes the tone of the email? Are there any other changes you would make to create a more professional email?

Passive Voice is often used in newspaper articles, especially when it is already clear *who* made the action.

E.g. *The police arrested him* (active voice) vs: *He was arrested*. (Passive voice).

It is more common to use passive voice in this example because it is already clear that he was arrested by police. The subject of the sentence (the police) is not necessary.



5. Read the articles below and fill in the blanks with passive voice sentences using the verb in brackets. Use the tenses list on page 2 if unsure.

a) Andrew Hennels posted on Facebook that he was going to rob a supermarket, even uploading a photo of him with a knife. He.....*was caught*..... (catch) 15 minutes after the robbery, and all of the money *was returned*. (return) to the supermarket. He *was sentenced*(sentence) to four years in jail.

b) The government has said that the new train line *will be finished* (finish) by next year, but many residents point out that they said the same thing last year. Barney Smith, a local man, said "I don't think it *will be done* (do) by next year." Another man added: "But it *has to be finished* (has to/finish) soon, the construction is driving the locals crazy."

c) Many people underestimate the importance of bees. Bees are not just for making honey, they *are used* (use) to pollenate numerous crops, including coffee. It *is estimated* (estimate) that crops pollinated by bees are worth \$215 billion worldwide. Unfortunately, in recent years a dramatic drop in bee population *has been reported*(reported) worldwide by farmers and beekeepers. The population drop *has been studied* (study) by many experts at the moment, but the exact cause is still unknown.

d) A 19 year old man from America called the police to report a crime. On the call he said "My house *has been broken into/was broken into* (break into), I need police here right away." When the police arrived, the man explained that 3 of his marijuana plants and a large amount of drug money *had been stolen/was stolen* (steal). The man *was arrested* (arrest) immediately, and is now awaiting trial.

e) The idea of cars that *will be driven/are driven* (drive) by artificial intelligence no longer seems like a science-fiction dream. Many experts believe our roads and highways *will be filled* (fill) with self-driving cars by 2030. Some have even said that at some point, driving your own car *will be made* (make) illegal, as it will interfere too much with the self-driving cars.