

ACTIVE AND PASSIVE VOICES

A. Read the following sentences:

- (1). *Emperor Ashoka enlarged the Samadhi of Sariputra.*
- (2). *The Samadhi of Sariputra was enlarged by Emperor Ashoka.*

The sentences given above have similar meaning, but the point of focus is greatly changed. In the first sentence, the point of focus is on Emperor Ashoka whereas in the second sentence it is the samadhi of Sariputra which becomes the point of focus.

If you read these sentences carefully, you will find that in the first sentence the subject 'Emperor Ashoka' is doing the action (the agent), but in the second sentence the subject 'The Samadhi of Sariputra' is not the agent (is not doing the action). It is the thing the action is directed at. The first sentence is in the **Active Voice** whereas the second is in the **Passive Voice**.

We can, therefore, say that a sentence can be either in the active or passive voice. In an active sentence, the subject performs the action. In a passive sentence, the subject receives the action.

Changing the Voice of a Sentence:

The change of voice of a given sentence entails certain structural changes. You have already observed that the subject of the **Active Voice** becomes the object of the **Passive Voice** and the object of the **Passive Voice** becomes the subject of the **Active Voice**.

Passive Voice of Simple Present and Simple Past

C. Now mark other structural changes in the sentences given below:

- (a) *I write a letter = A letter is written by me.*
- (b) *I receive letters = Letters are received by me.*

You see that in both the sentences the objects in the Active Voice become the subjects in the Passive Voice. They both take auxiliary verbs depending on their number: 'A letter' being singular takes 'is' (sentence 'a') 'letters' being plural takes 'are' (sentence 'b').

You also see that the main (Principal) verbs in both the cases are in the past participle form: 'written' (sentence 'a') and 'received' (sentence 'b'). The subject of the Active Voice which now becomes object is used in the objective case: 'me' for 'I'. It is also preceded by 'by'.

These changes are applicable to sentences in other tense forms as well.

D. Read the following sentences:

- (a) *The boy elaborated the statistics. = The statistics was elaborated by the boy.*
 (b) *She gave a coin to the beggar. = The beggar was given a coin by her. Or, A coin was given to the beggar by her.*

Mark how the choice of an auxiliary verb in the Passive Voice is governed by the tense forms. In section 'C' we used 'is' and 'are' as auxiliary verbs in the passive voice, but in this section we have used 'was'. Another important thing is that sentence (b) in this section has been changed into Passive Voice in two ways: first, by making 'The beggar' as the subject and the second, by making 'a coin' as the subject. This is because the sentence in the Active Voice has two objects: 'a coin' (direct object) and 'the beggar' (indirect object).

Note: We can omit 'by + agent' in the Passive Voice, if the agent is understood, unimportant or indefinite.

E. Look at some more examples:

- (a) **Active:** A good student respects a teacher.
Passive: A teacher is respected by a good student.
 (b) **Active:** Thomson discovered electrons.
Passive: Electrons were discovered by Thomson.

Mark the structural changes in the Active and the Passive Voice of the Simple Present and the Simple Past:

Tense	Active Voice	Passive Voice
Simple Present	NP ₁ (Subject) + V ₁ / V ₅ + NP ₂ (Object) e.g. Science affects the average man and woman	NP ₂ + is/am/are + V ₃ + by + NP ₁ e.g. The average man and woman are affected by science.
Simple Past	NP ₁ + V ₂ + NP ₂ e.g. He insulted my guest.	NP ₂ + was/ were + V ₃ + by + NP ₁ e.g. My guest was insulted by him.

Passive Voice of Present Continuous/Progressive and Past Continuous/Progressive

F. Read the following sentences:

1. *The mason is building the wall.* = *The wall is being built by the mason.*
2. *The mason was building the wall.* = *The wall was being built by the mason.*
3. *We are baking the bread.* = *The bread is being baked by us.*
4. *We were baking the bread.* = *The bread was being baked by us.*

You see that the auxiliary verb in the Active Voice is made to agree with the new subject in the Passive Voice: 'is' and 'was' in sentence 1 and sentence 2 are retained, as they agree with the new subject 'the wall' but in sentence 3 and 4 sentence, 'are' and 'were' are replaced by 'is' and 'was' respectively to agree with the new subject 'the bread'.

Again, 'being' is inserted between auxiliary verb and main verb (V₃). All other changes are as in the preceding section. The changes in the structure can be presented in through the following table:

Tense	Active Voice	Passive Voice
Present Continuous/Progressive	NP ₁ (Subject) + is/am/ are + V ₄ + NP ₂ (Object) e.g. The government is considering several new proposals.	NP ₂ + is/am/are + being + V ₃ + by + NP ₁ e.g. Several new proposals are being considered by the government.

Past Continuous/ Progressive	$NP_1 + was/were + V_4$ r NP_2 e.g. The government was considering several new proposals.	$NP_2 + was/ were + being +$ $V_3 + by + NP_1$ e.g. Several new proposals were being considered by the government.
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Passive Voice of Present Perfect/Non-Progressive and Past Perfect/ Non-Progressive

G. Read the following sentences:

1. *Different countries have adopted different animals as symbols of their ambition or character.*
 = *Different animals have been adopted by different countries as symbols of their ambition or character.*
2. *Different countries had adopted different animals as symbols of their ambition or character.*
 = *Different animals had been adopted by different countries as symbols of their ambition or character.*
3. *The government has announced some new schemes.*
 = *Some new schemes have been announced by the government.*
4. *The government had announced some new schemes.*
 = *Some new schemes had been announced by the government.*

You mark that the **Active Voice** sentences in Present Perfect undergo all the changes in the structure as noticed in earlier sections, except that auxiliary verb 'have' in sentence 1 and 'has' in sentence 3 are replaced by 'had' in the **Passive Voice**. Similar is the case with the **Active Voice** sentences in Past Perfect except that the auxiliary verb 'had' is retained in the **Passive Voice**. In both the cases, 'been' is inserted between auxiliary verb (have, 'had') and the main verb (V_3). The changes in the structure can be presented through the following table:

Tense	Active Voice	Passive Voice
Present Perfect	$NP_1 + have /has + V_3 + NP_2$ e.g. The company has ordered new equipments.	$NP_2 + have/has + been + V_3 + by + NP_1$ e.g. New equipments have been ordered by the company.
Past Perfect	$NP_1 + had + V_3 + NP_2$ e.g. The company had ordered new equipments.	$NP_2 + had + been + V_3 + by + NP_1$ e.g. New equipments had been ordered by the company.

Passive Voice of the sentences with modals

G. Read the following sentences:

1. *The manager should sign these contracts today.*
 = *These contracts should be signed by the manger today.*
2. *The officer will help me.*
 = *I shall/will be helped by the officer.*

Mark how the a modal is usually retained in the passive voice and 'be' is inserted between the modal and the main verb (V_3).

H. Now look at these sentences:

- (a) *Somebody should have called the President this morning.*
 = *The president should have been called this morning.*
- (b) *They will have completed the renovation by 2015.*
 = *By 2015, the renovation will have been completed.*

Note how 'should have' and 'will have' (modal + perfect) are retained in the passive voice. Also note how 'been' is inserted between the 'modal + perfect' and the main verb (V_3).

The changes in the structure can be presented in through the following table:

	Active Voice	Passive Voice
Modal	NP ₁ + modal + V ₁ + NP ₂ e.g. Sania Mirza can win the tournament.	NP ₂ + modal + be + V ₃ + by + NP ₁ e.g. The tournament can be won by Sania Mirza.
Modal + Perfect	NP ₁ + modal + have + V ₃ + NP ₂ e.g. Sania Mirza should have won the tournament.	NP ₂ + modal + have + been + V ₃ + by + NP ₁ e.g. The tournament should have been won by Sania Mirza.

Exercise- 1

Change the following sentences from Active to Passive voice:

1. Somebody calls me everyday.
2. John is calling all the other members.
3. The officer was delivering the documents to the department.
4. The other members have repealed the amendment.
5. The delegates had received the information.
6. The teacher should buy the book.
7. Somebody will call her tonight.
8. The fire had caused a considerable damage
9. The company had a new policy before the bankruptcy.
10. He will have received the papers by tomorrow.

1. Place the object at the place of the subject of the active sentence.
2. If there is any auxiliary verb in the active sentence, place it immediately after the new subject agreeing in number and person with the subject.
3. Insert the verb 'be' after the auxiliary verb in the same form as the main verb in the active sentence.
4. Place the main verb from the active sentence after auxiliary verb and 'be' in the past participle.
5. Place the subject of the active sentence after the verb in the passive sentence preceded by the preposition 'by'.

Note: 'By + agent' can be omitted if it is not important or is understood.)

(I) Passive Voice of the sentences with Causative Verbs (have, get, make)

Causative verbs are used to indicate that one person causes a second person to do something for the first person. Actually one causes somebody to do something for him or her by asking, forcing or paying. Causative verbs are: have, get and make.

(A) Have / Get

Read the following sentences:

1. Sohan had Rohan wash the car. = Sohan had the car washed by Rohan.
2. Sohan got Rohan to wash the car. = Sohan got the car washed by Rohan.

B. Make

'Make' can be followed only by a clause in the active voice. It is stronger than 'have' or 'get'. It is used to mean to force.

1. The Manager made the salesman attend the conference.
= The salesman was made to attend the conference by the manager.
2. The teacher always makes the students stay in the class.
= The students are always made to stay in the class by the teacher.
3. Ratan made his son cry in the theatre.
= His son was made to cry in the theatre by Ratan.
4. The robber made the teller give him the money.
= The teller was made to give him the money by the robber.

(j) The Passive and the agent

Look at the following sentences:

The car must be bought by my friend.

The car was stolen.

In a passive sentence, we sometimes mention the agent only if it is important for the meaning of the sentence otherwise we leave it.

Following are the cases where we do not need to mention the agent.

(1) We do not mention the agent if it is not important.

The streets are cleaned everyday.

A new government has been formed.

*Hamlet was written in 1601.

(2) We do not mention the agent if it does not add any new information.

A man was arrested last night.

My car was stolen.

We do not need to say that car was stolen by 'a thief' or the man was arrested by 'the police'.

- (3) We do not mention the agent **when it is difficult to say who the agent is:**
This kind of mobile is considered very fashionable these days.

Verb Form	Active	Passive
To-infinitive	(to+ V ₁), to play	(to + be+ V ₃) to be played
Perfect To-infinitive	(to have+ V ₃), to have played	(to + have +been+ V ₃) to have been played
Gerund	V ₄ , playing	being+ V ₃ , being played
Perfect gerund	having + V ₃	having + been played
	having played	

Use of Passive

We can use the passive in both speech and writing, but it is more common in writing. We can see it specially in text books and reports. We use it to describe objectives or processes in the industry, official rules and procedures, science and technology and, historical and social processes.

1. Bananas are exported to many countries.
2. Payment can be made at any time.
3. A number of political prisoners have been released.
4. Talks will be held in Delhi next week.
5. If sulphur is heated, a number of changes can be seen.
6. Thousands of new houses have been built.
7. This book must be returned to the library by the date above.

Exercise- 2

Change the following sentences into passive :-

1. The old lady takes snuff.
2. All love him.
3. The boy makes a mistake
4. The cat drank the milk.
5. The dog chased the little boy.
6. His parents passed him.
7. My cousins love stories.
8. Sita will bring the suitcase.
9. Somebody has put out the light.
10. A cruel man killed the bird.
11. People will soon forget the incident.
12. We prohibit drinking.
13. The farmer has gathered the information.
14. The scorer added runs in my name.

Exercise- 3

Change the following sentences into passive :-

1. Sohan throws the stone.
2. His behaviour shocked me.
3. A policeman caught the thief.
4. They opened the theatre only last month.
5. The recitation pleased the inspector.
6. All of you can win the race.
7. He keeps the students waiting.
8. They found him guilty of murder.
9. One should keep one's promises.
10. She is watching you very carefully.
11. The boy is climbing the tree.
12. I will conquer you.
13. Her singular appearance struck me.
14. I saw her and her old parents.
15. One cannot pump the ocean dry.
16. We saw him cross the river.