

Lesson No. 08

Active and Passive Voice

KEY POINTS

Active and Passive Voice

Verbs have two voices: an **active voice** and a **passive voice**. Voice as the form of a verb shows whether the subject of the verb does the action (the active voice) or whether the action is done to it (the passive voice). Accordingly, we can write a sentence in either of the two different ways. Nearly all the transitive verbs (verbs that have an object) can be used in the passive voice.

The verbs that are never used in the passive voice include **elude, escape, flee, get, have, let, like, race, resemble, and suit**. Other verbs that cannot be used as passive verbs because they take no direct object which are necessary to become the subjects include **arise, consist (of), depend (on), exist, fall, happen, occur, result (from), rise,** In passive voice, a verb or verb phrase typically uses the verb **be** (e.g. **was**), followed by a main verb in the past participle form. The verb is in the **active voice** when the subject, which can be a person or thing, performs the action. The following examples will show that changing the active sentence into a passive voice causes the subject to become the object, and the object becomes the subject.

Examples:

- Cats ate the fish.
(Subject: cats; verb: ate; object: fish. The doer of the action is the **cats**. The verb **ate** is in the active voice and is followed by the object **fish**.)
- The fish was eaten by cats.
(Subject: fish; verb: eaten; object: cats. This sentence is passive as the action is done to the subject which is the **fish**. The subject in the active voice **cats** now becomes the object of the verb **eaten**.)

Active and passive sentences

The verb or verb phrase used in the passive sentence typically uses the verb **be**, and is followed by the past participle form of a main verb and the preposition **by**. The passive verb should follow the tense of the active verb. For example, if the active verb is in the simple present tense, the passive verb too is in the simple present tense.

Examples:

Active sentence: The snake has swallowed a rodent.

Passive sentence: A rodent has been swallowed by the snake.

(**Has been** is a form of the verb **be**. **Swallowed** is the past participle of the verb **swallow**. The preposition **by** has to be used here; otherwise, no one knows what swallowed the rodent.)

Active sentence: The mosquitoes are biting me tonight.

Passive sentence: I am being bitten by mosquitoes tonight.

(**Am being** is a form of the verb **be**. **Bitten** is the past participle of **bite**.)

Passive verb is transitive verb

Only verbs that take on an object (**transitive verb**) can be a passive verb. The following examples have sentences in the active voice. Converting them into passive sentences seems quite impossible to do as each of them has an intransitive verb that does not have an object.

Examples:

- He **runs** away.
- The sun **shines** brightly.
- The boss **feels** tired today.

Using with

The preposition **by** can be omitted and another preposition **with** can be used in its place to show that something is used to perform an action.

Examples:

- **Active:** She cut the paper **with** a pair of scissors.
- **Passive:** The paper **was cut** (by her) **with** a pair of scissors.
- **Active:** He **beat** the prisoner **with** a metal bar.

- **Passive:** The prisoner was **beaten** (by him) **with** a metal bar.

Phrasal verb in the passive voice

Not all phrasal verbs can be used in passive sentences but many can. Two phrasal verbs are used here: **knock down** and **look down on**.

Examples:

- **Active:** They **knocked down** the front wall for some renovation work.
- **Passive:** The front wall **was knocked down** for some renovation work.
- **Active:** He feels his family **looks down on** him because he has little formal education.
- **Passive:** He feels he **is looked down on** by his family because he has little formal education.
- **Tenses in the Passive Voice**

The use of a tense in a passive sentence must be the same as that in the active sentence.

Simple present

Examples:

- **Active:** The big monkey **scratches** the small monkey.
- **Passive:** The small monkey **is scratched** by the big monkey.

Simple present continuous

Examples:

- **Active:** Their dog **is chasing** my cat.
- **Passive:** My cat **is being chased** by their dog.

Present perfect

Examples:

- **Active:** The men **have loaded** the sheep onto trucks.
- **Passive:** The sheep **have been loaded** onto trucks (by the men).

Simple past

Examples:

- **Active:** That kid **kicked** me on my knee.
- **Passive:** I **was kicked** on my knee (by that kid).

Past continuous

Examples:

- **Active:** The gang members **were discussing** the planned robbery.
- **Passive:** The planned robbery **was being discussed** (by the gang members).

Past perfect

Examples:

- **Active:** The hunter **had shot** two wild boars.
- **Passive:** Two wild boars **had been shot** by the hunter.

Simple future

Examples:

- **Active:** The children **will blow** up these balloons.
- **Passive:** These balloons **will be blown up** (by the children).

Future continuous

Examples:

- **Active:** She **will be painting** the doghouse.
- **Passive:** The doghouse **will be being painted** (by her).

- **Passive:** The prisoner was **beaten** (by him) with a metal bar.

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Future continuous

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Future perfect

Examples:

- **Active:** The police **will have questioned** the suspects.
- **Passive:** The suspects **will have been questioned** (by the police).

Modals

Examples:

- **Active:** He **should/must sell** his car.
- **Passive:** His car **should/must be sold** (by him).

Modal continuous

Examples:

- We **may be building** a giant sandcastle.
- A giant sandcastle **may be being built** (by us).

Modal perfect

Examples:

- **Active:** The robber **could have shot** his victim in the head. .
- **Passive:** The victim **could have been shot** in the head by the robber.

Imperative sentence in the active voice to passive:

An imperative sentence in the passive voice has the following form: **Let + object + be + past participle.**

- **Active:** Carry it home.
- **Passive:** Let it be carried home.
- **Active:** Do it at once.
- **Passive:** Let it be done at once.
- **Active:** Open the door.
- **Passive:** Let the door be opened.
- **Active:** Throw the ball.
- **Passive:** Let the ball be thrown.

When the active voice is in the negative, the passive voice takes the form: **Let + object + not + be + past participle.**

- **Active:** Do not beat the dog.
- **Passive:** Let the dog not be beaten.

Note that **do** is not used in the passive form.

We can begin the passive sentence with **you** if we want to put emphasis on the person addressed to.

Compare:

- **Active:** Help me.
- **Passive:** Let me be helped.
- **Passive:** You are requested to help me.
- **Active:** Learn the poem.
- **Passive:** Let the poem be learned.
- **Passive:** You are asked to learn the poem.
- **Active:** Don't touch it.
- **Passive:** Let it not be touched.
- **Passive:** You are warned not to touch it.

Note that the passive form has to begin with **you** when the object of the active verb is not mentioned.

- **Active:** Work hard.
- **Passive:** You are advised to work hard.

Here the active verb does not have an object. Therefore the passive form should begin with **you**.

- **Active:** Get out.
- **Passive:** You are ordered to get out.

Passive Sentence with Two Objects

A verb can have two possible passive voices when it takes two objects: a direct object and an indirect object. Normally, it is the indirect object (the object that appears first in an active sentence) which becomes the subject of the passive sentence. We can however also use the direct object as the subject.

Examples:

- Active: The salesman showed him (indirect object) a new computer (direct object).
- Active: The salesman showed a new computer to him..
- Passive: He was shown a new computer.
- Passive: A new computer was shown to him.
- Active: We lent Ajab Khan some money.
- Active: We lent some money to Ajab Khan.
- Passive: Ajab Khan was lent some money.
- Passive: Some money was lent to Ajab Khan.
- Active: Ali sent Sana a large bouquet of white and red roses.
- Active: Ali sent a large bouquet of white and red roses to Sana.
- Passive: Sana was sent a large bouquet of white and red roses by Ali.
- Passive: A large bouquet of white and red roses was sent to Sana by Ali.

More on Passive Voice

The passive sentence requires a verb that has an object (transitive verb). The intransitive verb does not take an object, so it does not allow the construction of a passive sentence. The following sentences show some verbs are both transitive and intransitive.

Examples:

- **Transitive:** My father is reading the newspaper.
- **Passive:** The newspaper is being read by my father.
- **Intransitive:** My father is reading.
- **Transitive:** They laughed at me.
- **Passive:** I was laughed at (by them).
- **Intransitive:** They laughed.

Sometimes, it is necessary to name the one who did the action. Not doing so can make no sense to the passive sentence. The three sentences here appear incomplete, making them necessary to have the doers that are included in the following three sentences.

Examples:

- The match was won.
- We were woken.
- That picture was drawn.
- The match was won by Liverpool.
- We were woken by thunder.
- That picture was drawn by my sister.

Notices often make use of the passive voice.

Examples:

- Guests are advised not to leave their belongings unattended.
- No visitors are allowed after 8 p.m.
- Smoking in the cinema is strictly prohibited.

Examples:

- It is said that sweets are the main culprits of obesity among children.
- He is said to be the leader behind the kidnapping of the President's son.
- I got cheated by the salesman (in place of "I was cheated by the salesman.").

Some verbs such as the reflexive verb are not used in the passive voice.

Examples:

- He would talk to himself when no one was around.
(The word **himself** is a reflexive verb.)

- Long hair really suits her.
(Not: She is really suited by long hair.)

Some verbs are used more frequently in the passive than in the active.

Examples:

- He was born with a rare skin disease.
- The species was doomed to extinction.

ETEA PAST PAPERS (Lesson No. 8 Active and Passive Voice)

ETEA MEDICAL PAPER YEAR 2017

- Q 34) Why did your supervisor take such a strong disciplinary action when you were innocent?
- Why has such a strong disciplinary action taken by your supervisor when you were innocent?
 - Why was such a strong disciplinary action being taken by your supervisor when you were innocent?
 - Why was such a strong disciplinary action taken by your supervisor when you were innocent?
 - Why such a strong disciplinary action was taken by your supervisor when you were innocent?

ANSWER: (c)

- Q 35) The rules forbid passengers to cross the railway line.
- Passengers were forbidden by the rules to cross the railway line.
 - Passengers are being forbidden by the rules to cross the railway line.
 - Passenger are forbidden by the rules to cross the railway line
 - Passengers are forbid by the rules to cross the railway line.

ANSWER: (c)

- Q. 30) Do not disturb him or nothing
- Let not he be disturbed for nothing
 - He is not to be disturbed him for nothing
 - Nobody should disturb him for nothing
 - We should be not disturb him for nothing

ANSWER: (a)

- Q. 31) People chain to have seen the suspect in several cities.
- The suspect was claimed to be seen by the people in several cities.
 - The suspect is claimed to have been seen is several cities.
 - The suspect has claimed to be seen by the people in several cities.
 - The suspect is being claimed to be seen is several cities by the people

ANSWER: (b)

ETEA MEDICAL PAPER YEAR 2016

- Q. 32) The principal has forbidden smoking on the

campus.

Select the correct passive voice:

- Smoking has been forbidden on the campus by the principal.
- Smoking had been forbidden on the campus by the principal.
- Smoking was being forbidden on the campus by the principal.
- It is forbidden by the principal to smoke on campus

HINT: In Present Perfect Tense we use "have been" or "has been" in passive sentences.

ANSWER: (a)

- Q. 33) Together the old man and the young boy washed the dishes.

Select the correct passive voice:

- The old man and the young boy were washing the dishes together.
- The old man and the young boy together washed the dishes.
- The dishes were washed by the old man and the young boy together.
- Together, the old man and the young boy wash the dishes.

HINT: In Past Indefinite Tense we use "was/were" in passive voice sentences.

ANSWER: (c)

- Q. 34) Communication technology has brought a tremendous revolution in modern societies.

Select the correct passive voice.

- A tremendous revolution has been brought in communication technology in modern societies.
- In modern societies a tremendous revolutions has been brought in communication technology.

- A tremendous revolution has brought in communication technology in modern societies
- Communication technology has tremendous revolution brought in modern societies

HINT: "has/have" is changed into "have/has been" to make passive voice.

ANSWER: (a)

ETEA MEDICAL PAPER YEAR 2015

- Q. 35) Will you give me your bicycle?

Passive form of the sentence is:

- Will your bicycle be given to me by you?
- Shall you be given to me by your bicycle?

- (c) I shall be given your bicycle by you?
(d) Your bicycle will be given to me by you?

ANSWER: (a)

Q. 36) She does not wash clothes on Fridays:

Passive form of the sentence is:

- (a) Clothes are not being washed by her on Fridays.
(b) Clothes were not washed by her on Fridays.
(c) Clothes were not being washed by her on Fridays.
(d) Clothes are not washed by her on Fridays.

ANSWER: (d)

Q. 37) His bad friends will ruin him.

Passive form of the sentence is:

- (a) He will ruin his bad friends.
(b) He is ruined by his bad friends.
(c) He will be ruined by his bad friends
(d) He is being ruined by his bad friends.

ANSWER: (c)

Q. 38) I keep the butter in the fridge.

Select the correct passive voice:

- (a) In the fridge the butter is kept by me.
(b) By me is the butter kept in the fridge.
(c) The butter is kept by me in the fridge.
(d) Kept in the fridge by me is the butter.

ANSWER: (c)

ETEA MEDICAL PAPER YEAR 2013

Q. 39) Fire destroyed the top floor of the building.

Select the correct passive voice:

- (a) The top floor of the building got destroyed by fire.
(b) By fire was destroyed the top floor of the building.
(c) Destroyed by fire was the top floor of the building.
(d) The top floor of the building was destroyed by fire.

ANSWER: (d)

Q. 40) The police arrested him for dangerous driving.

Select the correct passive voice:

- (a) He was arrested for dangerous driving by the police.
(b) He was arrested by the police for dangerous driving.
(c) For dangerous driving he was arrested by the police.
(d) By the police was he arrested for dangerous driving.

ANSWER: (b)