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Level: Master One

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Lesson 3: English Grammar "Active and Passive Voice"

Voice refers to the form of a verb that indicates when a grammatical subject performs the action or is the receiver of the action. When a sentence is written in the active voice, the subject performs the action; in the passive voice, the subject receives the action. In academic writing, it is generally preferred to choose an active verb and pair it with a subject that names the person or thing doing or performing the action. Active verbs are stronger and usually more emphatic than forms of the verb "be" or verbs in the passive voice.

***Active: The award-winning chef prepares each meal with loving care.**

***Passive: Each meal is prepared with loving care by the award-winning chef.**

Using the Auxiliary Verb "Be"

The passive voice is formed by using a form of the auxiliary verb "be" (be, am, is, are, was, were, being, been) followed by the past participle of the main verb.

Active

He loves me.

We **took** our children to the circus.

A thief **stole** my money.

Passive

I am loved.

The children **were taken** to the circus.

My money **was stolen**

Verb Tenses Used In Active and Passive Voice

The following is a summary of active and passive forms of all verb tenses. Remember that in active forms the subject of the sentence is the person or thing that does the action. In passive constructions, the verb is performed by someone or something other than the subject; often, the action is done to the subject by someone else.

Present Time

Simple Present tense

An Active sentence in the simple present tense has the following structure:

- ✓ **Subject + first form of the verb + object**

A passive sentence in the simple present tense has the following structure:

- ✓ **Object of the active sentence + is/am/are + past participle form of the verb + by +subject of the active sentence**

Changing an assertive sentence into the passive

- ✓ Active: I **write** a letter.
- ✓ Passive: A letter **is written** by me.
- ✓ Active: I **help** you.
- ✓ Passive: You **are helped** by me.
- ✓ Active: We **love** our country.
- ✓ Passive: Our country **is loved** by us

Changing a negative sentence into the passive

- ✓ Active: I **do not write** a letter.
- ✓ Passive: A letter **is not written** by me.
- ✓ Active: I **do not abuse** my servants.
- ✓ Passive: My servants **are not abused** by me.

Changing an interrogative sentence into the passive

- ✓ **Structure: Is/are/am + object of the active verb + past participle form of the verb + by + subject of the passive verb.**
- ✓ Active: Do you write a letter?
- ✓ Passive: **Is** a letter **written** by you?
- ✓ Active: Do you write stories?
- ✓ Passive: **Are** stories **written** by you?

- ✓ Active: Who does not obey you?
- ✓ Passive: **By whom** are you not obeyed?
- ✓ Active: Which newspaper do you read?
- ✓ Passive: Which newspaper **is read** by you?

Past Time

Simple Past Tense

Active sentences in the simple past tense have the following structure:

Subject + past tense form of the verb + object

Passive sentences in the simple past tense have the following structure:

**Object of the active sentence + was/were + past participle form of the verb
+ by + subject of the active sentence**

Changing an assertive sentence into the passive

*Active: He **wrote** a letter.

*Passive: A letter **was written** by him.

*Active: They **knew** it.

*Passive: It **was known** to them.

*Active: He **loved** his friends very much.

*Passive: His friends **were loved** very much by him.

Changing a negative sentence into the passive

*Active: She **did not know** anything about it.

*Passive: Nothing about it **was known** to her.

*Active: Nobody **could discourage** him from pursuing his path.

*Passive: He **could not be discouraged** from pursuing his path by anybody.

*Active: You **did not listen** to me.

*Passive: I **was not listened to** by you.

Changing an interrogative sentence into the passive

Passive forms of these sentences begin with **did**. If the **active** sentence begins with a question word, the **passive** sentence will also begin with a question word. If the **active** sentence begins with **who** or **whose**, the **passive** sentence will

begin with **by whom** or **by whose**. If the **active** sentence begins with **whom**, the **passive** sentence will begin with **who**.

1. Active: **Did he break** the window?
2. Passive: **Was** the window **broken** by him?
3. Active: Where **could** you **find** such fine art?
4. Passive: Where **could** such fine art **be found**?
5. Active: Why **did** you **abuse** your servant?
6. Passive: Why **was** your servant **abused** by you?
7. Active: Who **killed** the snake?
8. Passive: **By whom** was the snake **killed**?

Future Time

Simple Future Tense

Active: Subject + will/shall + first form of the verb + object

Passive: Object of the active sentence + will/shall + be + past participle form of the verb + by + subject of the active sentence.

- ✓ **Active:** I will write a letter.
- ✓ **Passive:** A letter will be written by me.
- ✓ **Active:** she will help me.
- ✓ **Passive:** I will be helped by her.

Changing a negative sentence into the passive

- ✓ Active: She will not help us.
- ✓ Passive: We will not be helped by her..
- ✓ Active: We shall not betray our country.
- ✓ Passive: Our country shall not be betrayed by us.

Changing an Interrogative sentence into the passive

- ✓ Active: Will you help him?
- ✓ Passive: Will he be helped by you?
- ✓ Active: Will you not help me?
- ✓ Passive: Shall I not be helped by you?