

The voice of a sentence tells us who does what. In *active voice*, the subject does the action. In *passive voice*, the subject receives the action.

## ACTIVE



## PASSIVE



I walk the dog.

*subject + verb + object*

- I = *subject*
- walk = *verb/action*
- the dog = *direct object* (action directly affects the dog)

The dog is walked by me.

*subject + verb + indirect object*

- The dog = *subject*
- is walked = *verb + past participle*
- by me = *indirect object* (preposition + object)

★How do we identify active and passive sentences? ★

An active sentence can have a simple or compound verb.

In this case, a compound verb uses the auxiliary (helper) verb 'to be' + past participle of the action.

## Active Simple Verb

I stirred the solution.

You ate tacos.

## Active Compound Verb

I am stirring the solution.

You will eat tacos.

All above sentences are *active* because the subject performs the action and appears before the verb.

However, a passive sentence always has a compound verb.

The solution was stirred by me.

The tacos are eaten by you.

The dog was walked by me.

The tacos were eaten by you.

In a *passive* sentence, the action/verb is done by the subject.

## ★ Why choose to write with the active or the passive voice? ★

1. **Active voice is stronger, clearer, and usually more straightforward – we know who/what is doing the action right away.**

### Active

The bully threw the dodgeball at the last player standing.

vs.

The author humanizes the main character through the use of adjectives.

vs.

### Passive

The dodgeball was thrown at the last player standing by the bully.

Adjectives were used to humanize the main character.

2. **Passive voice is useful if the subject is unknown, unspecified, and in some cases, not required.**

Ex: It was thought that rainbows were magic.

*Who thought this? General idea of some people long ago.*

3. **Passive voice can also be a stylistic choice.**

Ex: The burning pot was left on the stove.

*→ Who left the pot to burn?*

*We don't know, or maybe we aren't supposed to know!*

OR

*→ Maybe the point is where the pot was left on the stove so placing it at the end of the sentence emphasizes this detail.*

4. **Passive voice is common in scientific writing, such as lab reports, where the emphasis is on the action and what was acted upon rather than the person performing it.**

Ex: The solution was placed in the centrifuge.

*This sentence omits "I" or "me" although it's implied that I placed the solution in the centrifuge.*



# Active vs. Passive Voice Continued

## Practice

For the following sentences, identify whether they are in active or passive voice.

1. William Shakespeare introduced many common words and phrases into the English language, including ‘gossip,’ ‘obscene,’ and ‘jaded.’

ACTIVE or PASSIVE? \_\_\_\_\_

2. The article was written in 2018 by Jane Smith.

ACTIVE or PASSIVE? \_\_\_\_\_

For the following sentences, identify whether they are in active or passive voice then write them in the alternate voice.

Ex: Kristin drives the car. ACTIVE

ALTERNATE: The car was driven by Kristin.

3. Empire State High School wins the championship every year.

ACTIVE or PASSIVE?

ALTERNATE: \_\_\_\_\_

4. The elevator will be inspected by the property manager.

ACTIVE or PASSIVE?

ALTERNATE: \_\_\_\_\_

5. The poetry book was written by Vincente G. Perez.

ACTIVE or PASSIVE?

ALTERNATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Answer Key

1. ACTIVE  
2. PASSIVE  
3. ACTIVE—ALTERNATE: The championship is won by Empire State High School every year.  
4. PASSIVE—ALTERNATE: The property manager will inspect the elevator.  
5. PASSIVE—ALTERNATE: Vincente G. Perez wrote the poetry book.