

Active sentences vs passive sentences

When **A does B**, we have two possible ways of talking about it: **active** or **passive**. In active sentences, **A is the subject** (before the verb). In passive sentences, **B is the subject**. Check the following examples:

Present simple

They clean the classroom everyday. | (Active)

The classroom is cleaned very day. | (Passive)

Past simple

Somebody cleaned **the classroom** yesterday. (Active)

The classroom was cleaned yesterday. (Passive)

The object of an active sentence is the subject of a passive sentence. In an active sentence, the subject is the 'doer' of the action, and the object is the 'receiver' of the action. In a passive sentence, the subject is the receiver of the action, NOT the doer. Compare:

- **Somebody** broke the window.
- **The window** was broken (by someone).

In the first sentence, 'somebody' is the doer of the breaking, and in the second sentence, 'the window' is the receiver of the breaking.

When do we use the passive?

A Pasiva é máis formal que a voz activa. Empregámola cando non temos claro quen é o suxeito que fixo a acción.

Passive is more formal than the active, and it is more common in written language. We often use the passive when we don't know, when it is obvious, or when we don't want to say who or what is responsible for the action.

- A bank **was robbed** yesterday. (We don't know who robbed the bank.)
- The robber **was arrested** last night. (It's obvious that the police arrested the robber.)
- I **was told** that you insulted my brother. (I don't want to say who told me.)
- Jurassic Park **was filmed** by Spielberg in 1993. (I'm talking about Jurassic Park and not about Spielberg.)

Passive voice + by

We can use **by** to say who or what is responsible for the action.

- The painting was bought **by a very rich American**.
- Penicillin was invented **by Alexander Fleming**.