

THE PASSIVE VOICE

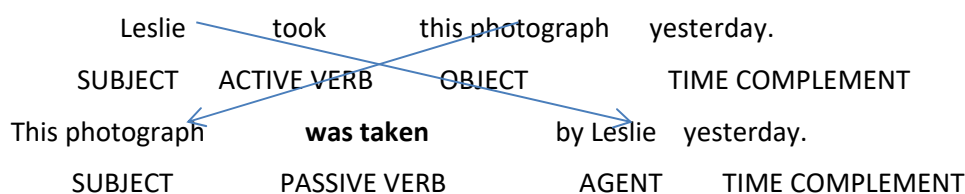
ACTIVE: My grandfather planted this tree.

PASSIVE: This tree was planted by my grandfather.

HOW TO CHANGE FROM ACTIVE TO PASSIVE

To change a sentence from the active voice to the passive voice:

- the **object** of the **active** voice sentence becomes the **subject** of the **passive** voice sentence.
- we change the main verb of the active voice sentence into the passive voice. The tense remains unchanged. The **passive verb** is formed by putting the verb **TO BE** into the same tense as the active verb and adding the **PAST PARTICIPLE** of the active verb
- the **subject** of the **active** voice sentence becomes the **agent of the passive** sentence. The agent is very often not mentioned. If it is mentioned, it is placed after the past participle and it is preceded by the preposition **BY**.



Agatha Christie wrote this book. ➔ This book was written by Agatha Christie.

PASSIVE VERB TENSES

	ACTIVE VOICE	PASSIVE VOICE
Present Simple	He delivers the letters.	The letters <i>are</i> delivered.
Past Simple	He delivered the letters.	The letters <i>were</i> delivered.
Future Simple	He will deliver the letters.	The letters <i>will be</i> delivered.
Present Continuous	He is delivering the letters.	The letters <i>are being</i> delivered.
Past Continuous	He was delivering the letters.	The letters <i>were being</i> delivered.
Going to	He is going to deliver the letters.	The letters <i>are going to be</i> delivered.
Present Perfect	He has delivered the letters.	The letters <i>have been</i> delivered.
Past Perfect	He had delivered the letters.	The letters <i>had been</i> delivered.
Future Perfect	He will have delivered the letters.	The letters <i>will have been</i> delivered.
Modal/ Conditional	He must deliver the letters.	The letters <i>must be</i> delivered.
	He would deliver the letters.	The letters <i>would be</i> delivered.
Modal Perfect	He must have delivered the letters.	The letters <i>must have been</i> delivered.
Perfect Conditional	He would have delivered	The letters <i>would have been</i> delivered.

USE The Passive is used:

1. when the agent (=the person who does the action) is unknown, unimportant or obvious from the context.
 - Jane was shot. (We don't know who shot her.)
 - This church was built in 1815. (Unimportant agent)
 - He has been arrested . (Obviously by the police)

2. when the action is more important than the agent (in instructions, events, headlines, advertisements.

30 people were killed in the earthquake.

We DON'T MENTION the agent:

1. if we don't know who has done what we are talking about.

Our car was stolen last night. (*We don't know who stole it*)

2. if we are not interested in who has done what we are talking about or it is not important to mention it.

He has been taken to hospital. (What we are interested in is the fact that he has been taken to hospital and not who has taken him.)

3. if it is easy to understand who did something without it being mentioned.

The murderer was arrested last night.

4. if the subject of the active voice sentence is something like somebody, people, they, you, etc.

Someone broke the window. → The window was broken.

DOUBLE OBJECT VERBS

When we have verbs that take two objects like, for example, give somebody something, we can change the active sentence into a passive one in two ways:

a. the indirect object becomes the subject of the passive voice sentence.

b. the direct object becomes the subject of the passive voice.

Rick gave me (indirect object) this book (direct object).

I was given this book by Rick.

This book was given **TO** me by Rick.

Some of the verbs that take two objects are: give, tell, send, show, bring, write, offer, pay, etc.

When the indirect object is after the verb in the passive voice sentence, it needs the preposition **TO**.

The first transformation is very common in spoken English.