

English Grammar

STUDY NOTES

Active & Passive (I)



Active and Passive Voice I

Words come together to form a sentence, and these sentences can be formed in more than one way. The way these sentences are made makes much difference in writing, and we are going to learn all about that in this chapter. One thing to note here is that no matter what structure the sentence assumes, the **meaning** and the **tense** of the sentence does not change. That's a very important point to keep in mind throughout this lesson. Keep it in mind. Let's dive straight into the realm of Active and Passive voice.

Basics of Active & Passive voice:

You know that each sentence has a **subject**, a **verb**, and an **object**.

A **subject** is an **agent** who performs the **verb** on the **object**. We will illustrate this with an example:

I swim in the ocean. – '**I**' as **subject**, **verb** is '**swim**', and '**ocean**' is an **object**.

My mother is playing the violin. — Here, the **subject** is '**my mother**', the verb is '**is playing**' and the object is '**the violin**'.

Active voice: When the **subject** directly acts on the **object**, the sentence is written in the Active voice.

Passive voice: In this case, the sentence is written in Passive voice when the **subject** acts upon the **object**.

In both the above sentences, what changes is only the structure because the meaning and the tense remain the same. The structure, or the sequence in which the subject, verb, and object are expressed in an active voice sentence, gets reversed while changing a passive voice of the same sentence.

Structure of Active and Passive voice:

Active voice: Subject + Verb + Object

Passive voice: Object + Verb + Subject

You must have witnessed that the verb form changes when one switches from active to passive voice. Generally, verbs are of two kinds: the **main** and the **auxiliary** verbs. Usually, an **auxiliary** verb is accompanied by the **main verb**. The auxiliary verbs like **be, do, or have** show the tense or mood of the **verb**. For example, in the sentence "I have finished my scuba diving course in the Havelock Islands," the main verb is '**finished**' and the **auxiliary** verb '**has**'.

As a thumb rule, **Passive voice** sentences always take the **third form** of the **verb**, also called the **past participle form of the verb** (example: eat, ate, eaten - eaten is the third form of the verb).

So the main-verb usage is quite easy to transfer into. It's the **auxiliary verb** that we have to learn more about. Let's get into it:

Tense- based forms:

1. Present Indefinite Tense

Structure:

Active Voice: Subject + V1/ V5 + Object

Passive Voice: Object of the active voice (Subjective case) + am/is/are + V3 + by + Subject of the active voice (Objective case)

Examples:

Active: She writes a letter.

Passive: A letter is written by her.

Active: They play football.

Passive: Football is played by them.

2. Present Continuous Tense

Structure:

Active Voice: Subject + am/is/are + V1 + ing + Object

Passive Voice: Object of the active voice (Subjective case) + am/is/are + being + V3 + by + Subject of the active voice (Objective case)

Examples:

Active: He is reading a book.

Passive: A book is being read by him.

Active: They are watching a movie.

Passive: A movie is being watched by them.

3. Present Perfect Tense

Structure:

Active Voice: Subject + has/have + V3 + Object

Passive Voice: Object of the active voice (Subjective case) + has/have + been + V3 + by + Subject of the active voice (Objective case)

Examples:

Active: She has finished the homework.

Passive: The homework has been finished by her.

Active: They have completed the project.

Passive: The project has been completed by them.

4. Simple Past Tense

Structure:

Active Voice: Subject + V2 + Object

Passive Voice: Object of the active voice (Subjective case) + was/were + V3 + by + Subject of the active voice (Objective case)

Examples:

Active: He wrote a letter.

Passive: A letter was written by him.

Active: They played football.

Passive: Football was played by them.

5. Past Continuous Tense

Structure:

Active Voice: Subject + was/were + V1 + ing + Object

Passive Voice: Object of the active voice (Subjective case) + was/were + being + V3 + by + Subject of the active voice (Objective case)

Examples:

Active: She was reading a book.

Passive: A book was being read by her.

Active: They were watching a movie.

Passive: A movie was being watched by them.

6. Past Perfect Tense

Structure:

Active Voice: Subject + had + V3 + Object

Passive Voice: Object of the active voice (Subjective case) + had + been + V3 + by + Subject of the active voice (Objective case)

Examples:

Active: He had written a letter.

Passive: A letter had been written by him.

Active: They had played football.

Passive: Football had been played by them.

7. Simple Future Tense

Structure:

Active Voice: Subject + will/shall + V1 + Object

Passive Voice: Object of the active voice (Subjective case) + will/shall + be + V3 + by + Subject of the active voice (Objective case)

Examples:

Active: She will write a letter.

Passive: A letter will be written by her.

Active: They will play football.

Passive: Football will be played by them.

8. Future Perfect Tense

Structure:

Active Voice: Subject + will/shall + have + V3 + Object

Passive Voice: Object of the active voice (Subjective case) + will/shall + have + been + V3 + by + Subject of the active voice (Objective case)

Examples:

Active: He will have written a letter.

Passive: A letter will have been written by him.

Active: They will have played football.

Passive: Football will have been played by them.

9. Modal Verbs

Structure:

Active Voice: Subject + can/could/may/might/should/must + V1 + Object

Passive Voice: Object of the active voice (Subjective case) + can/could/may/might/should/must + be + V3 + by + Subject of the active voice (Objective case)

Examples:

Active: She can write a letter.

Passive: A letter can be written by her.

Active: They must complete the project.

Passive: The project must be completed by them.

The conversions of the above structures have been shared below in tabular form.

TENSE	ACTIVE VOICE	PASSIVE VOICE (be + V ₃)
Simple present	write, writes (V ₁ or V _{s/es})	am/is/are written (V ₃)
Simple past	wrote (V ₂)	was/were written (V ₃)
Simple future	will/shall write (V ₁)	will/shall be written (V ₃)
Present continuous	am/is/are writing (V ₄)	am/is/are being written (V ₃)
Past continuous	was/were writing (V ₄)	was/were being written (V ₃)
Present perfect	have/has written (V ₃)	have/has been written (V ₃)
Past perfect	had written (V ₃)	had been written (V ₃)
Future Perfect	will/shall have written (V ₃)	will/shall have been written (V ₃)