

Active and Passive voice

Objective

At the end of the class, the students will be able to:

1. identify the status of a sentence, whether it is in active voice or in passive voice.
2. rewrite a given sentence into passive voice and the reverse.
3. rewrite a given sentence into impersonal passive voice.

Description

When the doer of the action is placed as the subject of a sentence, the sentence is said to be in active voice. If not so, it is said to be in passive voice. Passive voice is used when the focus of the speaker or the writer is more on the action and the object on which the action is carried. Impersonal passive voice is used when reference of the doer is not required.

Examples:

- a. Children play games.
Games are played by children.
- b. I know you.
You are known to me.
- c. A policeman caught the thief.
The thief was caught by a policeman.
- d. They bought the car only last month.
The car was bought by them only last month.

EXERCISE I

Change the following sentences from the active voice to the passive voice.

1. She learnt German.
2. My sister painted that picture.
3. His friend laughed at him.
4. We expect good news. ('news' is always singular)
5. The people welcomed the Chief Minister.
6. He teaches English.
7. The gardener prepared the soil.
8. He made a very remarkable discovery.
9. Columbus discovered America.
10. Little strokes fell great oaks. (fell-felled-felled)
11. The Egyptians knew the art of jewellery making as early as 3000 B.C.
12. In ancient India too, skilled artisans made exquisite gold ornaments.
13. The nations of the world accept gold as a medium of international exchange.
14. We do not use gold for coinage nowadays
15. The Greeks developed the art of coin-making to a high degree of skill.
16. Gold possesses two properties.

17. We pass an electric current across the electrodes.
18. Welders normally prefer a vee-shaped weld
19. Multinational companies make huge investments in oil-rich countries.
20. We use radiation measuring instruments to monitor radiation levels.

Examples:

1. A letter was written by him.
He wrote a letter.
2. Good English is spoken by him.
He speaks good English.

EXERCISE II

Change the following sentences from the passive voice to the active voice.

1. The first railway was built by George Stephenson.
2. The trees were blown down by the wind.
3. The child was knocked down by a car.
4. The first prize was won by my sister.
5. The King was welcomed by the people.
6. A joint news conference on various issues was cancelled by the White House.
7. Shakuntala was written by Kalidas.
8. He was taken to the hospital by his friends.
9. Honey is made by bees.
10. The telephone was invented by Alexander Graham Bell.

Examples:

- a. She can drive a car.
A car can be driven by her.
- b. They may buy that house.
That house may be bought by them.
- c. You should do your duty.
Your duty should be done by you.

EXERCISE III

Put the following sentences into the passive voice.

1. We must listen to his words.
2. A very small quantity of nuclear fuel can produce enormous amount of energy.
3. The rural people can use the dual-purpose bicycle to power small scale agricultural implements.
4. We can store the water in the tanks.
5. We can use coal to produce detergents, explosives and paints.
6. It is also ductile; this means that we can draw it out into a wire.
7. We can pass an electric current across the electrodes.

8. Users can maintain this pump themselves.
9. This will prevent metal surfaces from coming into contact.
10. Teachers can best sow the seed for any type of behaviour at a tender age.

Examples

1. Do this work.
Let this work be done.
2. Shut the window.
Let the window be shut.
3. Speak the truth.
Let the truth be spoken.

EXERCISE IV

Put the following sentences into the passive voice.

1. Answer these questions now itself.
2. Do not insult the weak.
3. Summon the fire-brigade.
4. Shun the broad path.
5. Pay that bill today.
6. Subject him to a severe examination.
7. Open the door.
8. Call him tomorrow.

Examples

- a. She is singing songs.
Songs are being sung by her.
- b. Sita is buying a car.
A car is being bought by Sita.
- c. He was writing letters.
Letters were being written by him

Exercise V

Change from the active voice to the passive voice.

1. I am watching you very carefully.
2. John is writing essays.
3. The mason is building the wall.
4. Some boys were helping the wounded man.
5. Iceland is making plans to become the world's first hydrogen-powered economy.

Examples:

- a. He has bought a house.

- A house has been bought by him.
- b. They have done it.
It has been done by them.
- c. He had written a letter.
A letter had been written by him.

EXERCISE VI

1. They have built a new bridge across the river.
2. They have announced our results.
3. Ants have eaten the cakes.
4. They have appointed the senior most Lecturer as Principal.
5. Somebody has put out the light.
6. The English Electric Co. of India has recently introduced two Residual Current Devices.
7. Indian Airlines has introduced the automatic printing of tickets in major cities.
8. A team of Canadian students from Ontario, has set a new world record for the longest distance travelled in a solar-powered vehicle.
9. The company has introduced several innovations in the design of the latest automobile.
10. Many faults have been ascribed to dams by people (into active).

Examples

1. Who wrote this letter?
By whom was this letter written?
2. Who told you?
By whom were you told?
3. Who teaches you English?
(i) By whom are you taught English? (ii) By whom is English taught to you?
4. How can you do it?
How can it be done by you?

EXERCISE VII

Change from the active voice to the passive voice.

1. How can we solve this problem?
2. Why did you do it?
3. Can you do it?
4. Shall I ever forget those happy days?
5. Why did your brother write such a letter?
6. Who did this?
7. Have you answered all the questions?
8. Will you buy that picture?
9. When did the scientists launch the first India-made satellite?
10. Where did you buy this ipod?

IMPERSONAL PASSIVE VOICE

Examples

1. They sell radios here
Radios are sold here.
2. They opened the theatre only last week.
The theatre was opened only last week.

Change into Impersonal Passive statements:

1. They constructed this house forty years ago.
2. We call these supports bearings.
3. We boil a little water in a tin and until the steam fills the can.
4. I took 20 ml. of the solution in a test tube.
5. The lorry carries the load to the factory.
6. He lubricated the ball-bearing.
7. Doctors use a clinical thermometer to measure body temperature.
8. They pass the gas through a water container.
9. We keep the cash in the box.
10. We clamp the two metal plates together.
11. Coal miners produce millions of tons of coal every week.
12. Welders normally prefer a vee-shaped weld.
13. The country does not produce any heavy industrial machinery.
14. They made *expeditions* into the middle and west of the country often under the most difficult conditions.
15. We use the community-type hybrid solar cooker for cooking a large quantity of food.

Examples:

1. We can do this work now itself.
This work can be done now itself.
2. They may construct a bridge across the river.
A bridge may be constructed across the river.

Change into impersonal passive statements

1. A skilled operator can carry out many operations on the lathe.
2. You must take care not to damage the machinery.
3. You can lubricate low-speed bearings with grease.
4. You may generate heat for welding in several ways.
5. This will prevent damage to the shaft.
6. We can generate heat for welding in many ways.
7. We can cast this type of metal into very complicated shapes.
8. The students must take care not to damage the spanner.
9. We must listen to his words.

Examples:

1. They have announced the results.
The results have been announced.
2. They have bought a car.
A car has been bought.
3. He had informed his friend.
His friend had been informed.

Change into impersonal passive statements:

1. The operator has set right the malfunctions of the telephone.
2. They have made a mistake in passing these orders.
3. The police have arrested yet another fraudulent finance company proprietor.
4. They have installed a new computing machine in the accounts section
5. They have successfully performed the operation.
6. The new manager has called for quotations.
7. They have increased the rate of interest.
8. They had exhausted the supply of wine.
9. The writer has focused attention on the emerging trends of technology.
10. We have introduced several innovations in the design of the latest automobiles.

Examples:

1. They are conducting tests.
Tests are being conducted.
2. He is answering question
Questions are being answered.
3. She was typing letters.
Letters were being types.

Change into impersonal passive statements:

1. They are constructing a new bridge across the river.
2. They are closing the inlet port.
3. We are making an efficiency test.
4. They are testing the new machine.
5. In this day and age, the computer is finding more applications than were ever conceived possible.

Examples:

1. Open the door.
Let the door be opened.
2. Inform him.
Let him be informed.

Change into impersonal passive forms:

1. Take the temperature.
2. Find out the expansion of the metal.
3. Increase the temperature.
4. Calculate the rate of change of momentum.
5. Take care not to damage the machines.

Examples:

1. How can you do this?
How can this be done?
2. Why did you change the plug?
Why was the plug changed?

Change into impersonal passive forms:

1. How can you do it?
2. Why did you do it?
3. Will they sell their car?
4. Should you see this film?
5. Did you inform him?
6. Have you posted the letters?