

## Active and Passive Voice

Any sentence can be written in either the active or the passive voice. In the active voice, the subject of the verb performs the action.

The crazy man ate five hamburgers  
I will complete the assignment in time

In the passive voice, the subject receives the verb's actions

Five hamburgers were eaten by the crazy man.  
The assignment will be completed in time.

In Academic English, one is encouraged to always use the active voice for the following reasons:

1. Active statements are more direct or vivid.

Passive

A new strategic plan **was drafted** at the meeting yesterday.

Active

Yesterday, the board members **drafted** a new strategic plan.

2. The passive voice can cause unnecessary verbosity

Passive

Hands **were clapped**, cheers **were shouted** and tears **were shed** by the fans when the Cardinals **were declared** winners of the World Series.

Active

Fans **clapped**, **cheered** and **cried** when the Cardinals **won** the World Series

3. The active voice emphasizes who or what is performing the action.
4. Subjects that act require powerful verbs that stimulate the imagination and senses.

Passive

The Jeep **was driven** down the street.

Active

The Jeep **careened** down the street.

However, the passive voice has some legitimate uses. It is the effective choice

- 1- When avoiding mentioning the subject/agent.

Example: Two flasks were filled with water.

- 2- When the agent is unknown.

Example: The purse was stolen.

- 3- When you want to emphasize who performed the action.

Example: The painting was stolen by masked thieves.

Forming the Passive sentence:			
Active	Subject	Transitive Verb*	Object
Passive	Object	Verb By +	Subject

\*Verbs that can have an object

### **Forming the Passive Verb:**

Simple Present: This school provides better education.	Be in the simple present + past participle of "provide"	Better education is provided by this school.
Simple Past: Sally kept the baby alone in the room.	Be in the simple past + past participle of "keep"	The baby was kept alone in the room by Sally.
Present Continuous: The police are investigating the theft.	Be in the simple present + being + past participle of "investigate"	The theft is being investigated by the police.
Past Continuous: They were doing everything to find the killer.	Be in the simple past + being + past participle of "do"	Everything was being done to find the killer.
Present Perfect: The chairperson has warned some students	Have in the simple present + been + past participle of "warn"	Some students have been warned by the chairperson.
Past Perfect: Someone had broken the lock.	Have in the simple past + been + past participle of "break"	The lock had been broken.
Simple Future: They will question her tomorrow	Will + be + past participle of "question"	She will be questioned tomorrow
Modal + Verb: They might buy a car next week.	Might + be + past participle of "buy"	A car might be bought next week.