

Graphic Grammar: The Passive Voice

Fullerton College Writing Center

Name: **KEY**

Watch the video. Then complete these exercises and check your answers.

Part 1: Active or Passive?

In an active sentence, the subject of the sentence is doing the action of the verb.
 In a passive sentence, someone else is doing the action of the verb to the subject.

A. Circle the subject in each sentence below. Then draw an arrow showing the direction of the action. Is the sentence active or passive?

- EXAMPLES: The students turned in their essays late. (Active) Passive
- The essays haven't been graded yet. (Active) Passive
 BE pp
- Jack was feeding his dog. (Active) Passive
 - Betty was given a birthday surprise. (Active) Passive
 BE pp
 - Junk food should not be eaten by anyone. (Active) Passive
 BE pp
 - Bill should not lie on the couch all day. (Active) Passive
 - Baby Bob just drank two bottles of milk. (Active) Passive
 - Baby Bob must be burped right away! (Active) Passive
 BE pp
 - Engineers are trying to fix the bridge. (Active) Passive
 - The bridge was damaged by the earthquake. (Active) Passive
 BE pp

B. To check your answers above, underline the verbs. If there is a form of BE and a past participle, then it is a passive sentence. Write "BE" and "pp" under the verb.

Part 2: Forms of BE

Complete the chart below.

Simple present	This car <u>is</u> stolen.
Present continuous	This car <u>is being</u> stolen.
Present perfect	This car <u>has been</u> stolen.
Modal (might)	This car <u>might be</u> stolen.
Modal (could)	This car <u>could be</u> stolen.
Future (will)	This car <u>will be</u> stolen.

Simple past	This car <u>was</u> stolen.
Past continuous	This car <u>was being</u> stolen.
Past perfect	This car <u>had been</u> stolen.
Past (might)	This car <u>might have been</u> stolen.
Past (could)	This car <u>could have been</u> stolen.
Future (going to)	This car <u>is going to be</u> stolen.

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Part 3: Changing a Sentence from Active to Passive

We often use passive sentences when the subject is unknown, obvious, or unimportant. We also use passive to sound more polite or formal or to avoid blaming someone.

To change a sentence from active to passive, first find the object. The object becomes the subject. It could be the direct or indirect object, but if there is NO object, then the sentence **cannot** be changed to passive.

A. Circle the object in the sentences below. Then rewrite the sentence in passive form if possible.

EXAMPLE: People in Canada speak English and French.

English and French are spoken ~~by people~~ in Canada.

1. Somebody knocked over the trash can again.

The trash can was knocked over again (~~by somebody~~).

2. A blind person took these photos.

These photos were taken by a blind person.

3. A translator translated this book from Russian to English in 1895.

This book was translated from Russian to English in 1895 (~~by a translator~~).

4. Nobody has cleaned the bathroom for a week.

The bathroom has not been cleaned (~~by anybody~~) for a week.

5. An accident happened on the freeway last night.

X No passive form

6. Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone.

The telephone was invented by Alexander Graham Bell.

7. We do not allow smoking on this campus.

Smoking is not allowed (~~there~~) on this campus.

8. They will collect the trash one day late this week.

The trash will be collected one day late this week (~~by them~~).

B. In the sentences that you wrote above, cross out the "by" phrases that are unknown, obvious, or not important.