

# **Lesson 5 – Active and Passive Voice**

# Lesson 4. Active and Passive Voice

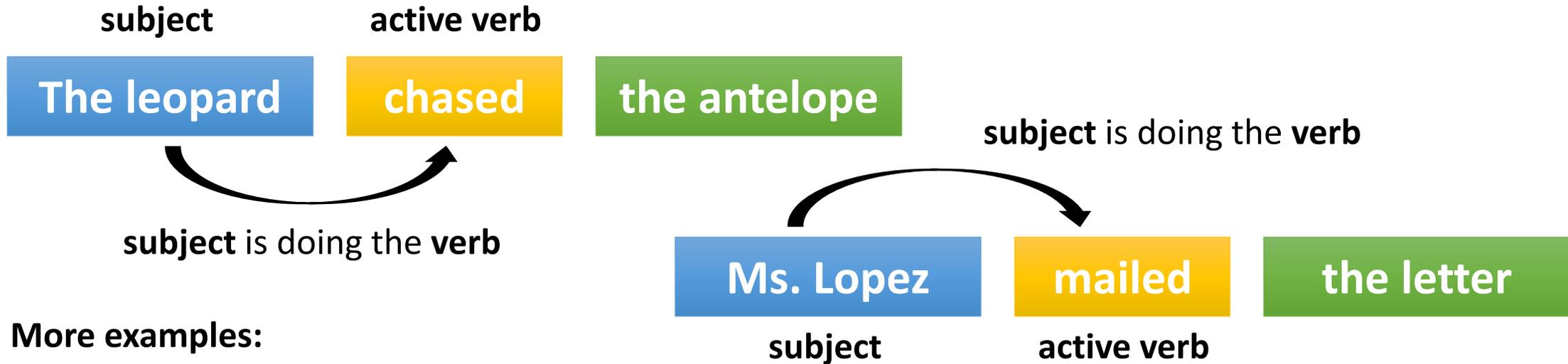
## Learning Objectives

**After this lesson, students will be able to:**

- Define and differentiate active and passive voice.
- Determine the relevance of learning about active and passive voice.
- Compare active voice and passive voice in different tenses
- Transform sentences from active to passive voice.
- Transform sentences from passive to active voice.
- Form sentences in both active and passive voice.

# Lesson 4. Active and Passive Voice

In most English sentences with an action verb, the subject performs the action denoted by the verb.



## More examples:

- ➔ The man must have eaten five hamburgers. (The *man* (subject) is doing the *eating* (verb).)
- ➔ Curiosity killed the cat ( *Curiosity* (subject) is doing the *killing* (verb).)
- ➔ The robber shot the sheriff. (The *robber* (subject) is doing the *shooting* (verb).)

Because the subject does or "acts upon" the verb in such sentences, the sentences are said to be in the **active voice**.

# Lesson 4. Active and Passive Voice

Sentences with verbs in the active voice are often more direct than those with passive-voice verbs.

## 1. Active sentences are shorter.

➡ *He saw the dog.* (This active sentence has four words and 11 characters.)

➡ *The dog was seen by him.* (This passive version has six words and 18 characters.)

## 2. With an active sentence, the subject takes responsibility for the action.

➡ *John made the decision to publish the article.*  
(This active sentence makes it clear that John was responsible.)

➡ *The decision was made to publish the article.*  
(With this passive sentence, we don't know who took the decision.)  
(NB: With a passive sentence, the doer of the action (called *the agent*) does not have to be named.)

## 3. Active sentences are more authoritative.

➡ I passed the law to protect the public.  
(Here, the author is taking responsibility, and credit, for passing the law. It is more authoritative than the passive version below.)

➡ The law was passed to protect the public.  
(With this version, the author is not taking responsibility, or blame, for the law. It comes across as less authoritative.)

# Lesson 4. Active and Passive Voice

## 4. Active sentences are more engaging for the reader.

Using active sentences tends to make your writing more engaging because the facts are absorbed as they are encountered. In other words, the sentences are ordered naturally (e.g., in the format "A did something to B").

➡ My mother advised me to avoid the lake.

(With this active sentence, the information is absorbed as you encounter it.)

➡ I was advised by my mother that the lake is to be avoided.

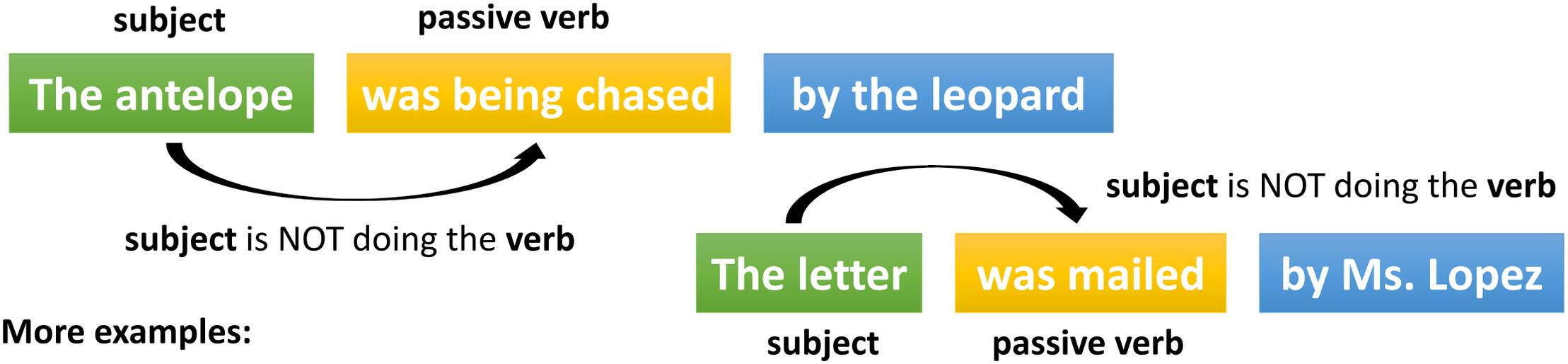
(This passive sentence requires the reader to momentarily hold information in "brain storage" before that information's relevance is known. In other words, the information is not fully absorbed as it is encountered.)

### **Key Point:**

Develop a bias for active sentences over passive sentences because active sentences are shorter, more direct, more informative, more authoritative, and easier to absorb.

# Lesson 4. Active and Passive Voice

A verb is said to be in the passive voice when its subject does not perform the action of the verb but has the action of the verb performed on it.



## More examples:

- ➔ Five hamburgers must have been eaten by the man. (*Hamburgers*(subject) are being *eaten* (verb).
- ➔ The cat was killed by curiosity. (*Cat* (subject) was *killed* (verb).
- ➔ The sheriff was shot by the robber (The *sheriff* (subject) was *shot* (verb).

Because the subject is being "acted upon" (or is *passive*), such sentences are said to be in the **passive voice**.

# Lesson 4. Active and Passive Voice

## 1. The passive voice is useful to avoid blame.

➔ *Bad advice was given.* (Active: John have bad advice.)

*The passive voice allows you to avoid mentioning the actor (i.e., the doer of the action).*

## 2. The passive voice often shows a neutral or objective tone.

➔ *Compromises were offered by all the warring factions.*

(The passive voice expresses a neutral tone.)

## 3. The passive voice can be appropriate when the actor is unimportant, unknown, or obvious.

➔ *The almonds are dried for two months.*

(The agent (i.e., the person who dries the almonds) is unimportant.)

## 4. The passive voice is useful to emphasize something by putting it at the start of your sentence.

➔ *The pigs were seen near the main road in Tamworth.*

(The pigs are the focus of this sentence. It does not matter who saw them.)

## 5. A passive-voice construction allows you to use the same subject twice.

➔ *John ran away but was arrested two hours later.*

(In this sentence, the subject is *John*. The verb *ran away* is an active verb. It is followed by *was arrested*, which is a passive verb. This construction allows you to say two things about *John* in a natural and efficient way.)

# Lesson 4. Active and Passive Voice

Determine whether the following sentences are using active or passive voice.

- A or  P 1. The actress wore a beautiful gown.
- A or  P 2. Halle Berry presented an Oscar.
- A or  P 3. Halle Berry has been seen in many movies.
- A or  P 4. The director has been nominated many times.
- A or  P 5. Old movies were filmed in black and white.
- A or  P 6. Many actors live in California. 7
- A or  P 7. Many movies are made in Hollywood.
- A or  P 8. The names of the winners will be printed in tomorrow's newspaper.
- A or  P 9. The actress thanked all the people who helped her win.
- A or  P 10. The actress was driven to the ceremony in a white limousine.
- A or  P 11. Hollywood was built at the beginning of the twentieth century.
- A or  P 12. Hollywood has become the movie capital of the U.S.

# Lesson 4. Active and Passive Voice

Fill in the blanks with the passive voice of the verb in parentheses. Use the tense or modal given.

1. Most American movies (make) in Hollywood.
2. Let's get some popcorn. It's fresh. It (make) right now.
3. Movie listings (can't find) in the newspaper.
4. Children (not allow) to see some movies.
5. Hurry! The winners (announce) in ten minutes.
6. In 1929, only fifteen Oscars (present)
7. Before 1941, the winners' names in (publish) newspapers the night before the ceremony
8. A new theater (build) near my house at this time.
9. We can't get into the movie theater because all the tickets (sell) already.
10. Did you see the movie Harry Potter? Where\_\_ it (film)?
11. I went to the lobby to buy popcorn, and my seat (take).
12. No one knows why the award (call)"Oscar."
13. *Slumdog Millionaire* (choose) as the best film of 2009.
14. In a movie theater, coming attractions<sup>1</sup> (show) before the feature film begins.
15. Sound (add) to movies in 1927.
16. 16. The Kodak Theatre, where the awards (present) each year, (build) in 2001.



# Lesson 4. Active and Passive Voice

Compare active voice and passive voice in different tenses.

Tense	Active	Passive = be+ Past Participle
Simple Present	A committee chooses the winner.	The winner is chosen by a committee
Present Continuous	They are presenting an award.	An award is being presented now.
Future	They will pick the best movie. They are going to pick the best movie.	The best movie will be picked. The best movie is going to be picked.
Simple Past	They announced the winner's name.	The winner's name was announced.
Past Continuous	They were interviewing the winners.	The winners were being interviewed.
Present Perfect	They have chosen the best movie.	The best movie has been chosen.
Modal	You can see the movie on DVD.	The movie can be seen on DVD.

Language Notes:

1. Both the active voice and the passive voice can be used with different tenses and with modals. The tense of the passive sentence is shown in the verb be. Use the past participle with every tense.
2. If two verbs in the passive voice are connected with and, do not repeat be. The Oscar ceremony is televised and seen by millions of people.

# Lesson 4. Active and Passive Voice

Fill in the blanks with the passive voice of the verb in parentheses. Use the tense or modal given.

1. (simple present: see)

The awards ceremony \_\_\_\_\_ by millions of people.

2. (future: choose)

Which actor \_\_\_\_\_ next year?

3. (modal: can / see)

The movie \_\_\_\_\_ at many theaters.

4. (present perfect: make)

Many movies about World War II.

5. (simple past: give)

Kate Winslet \_\_\_\_\_ the best actress award in 2009.

6. (present continuous: show)

A good movie \_\_\_\_\_ at a theater near my house.

7. (simple past: make)

Star Wars \_\_\_\_\_ in 1977.

8. (present perfect: show)

The movie \_\_\_\_\_ on TV many times.

9. (present perfect: give)

Over 2,000 Academy Awards \_\_\_\_\_ out since 1929.

10. (simple past: give)

In 1929, only one award \_\_\_\_\_ to a woman.

11. (simple past: add)

When \_\_\_\_\_ sound \_\_\_\_\_ to movies?

It \_\_\_\_\_ in 1927.

12. (simple present: often / make)

Movies in \_\_\_\_\_ Hollywood.

13. (present perfect: film)

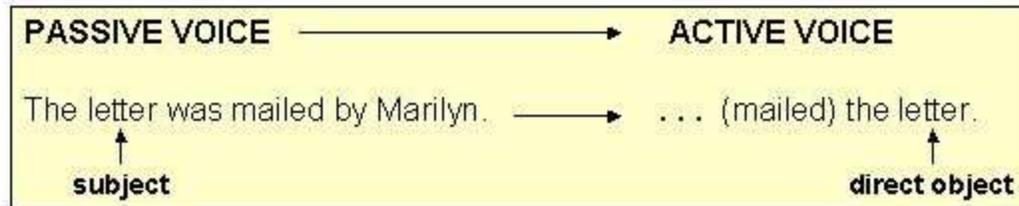
How many movies \_\_\_\_\_ in black and white?



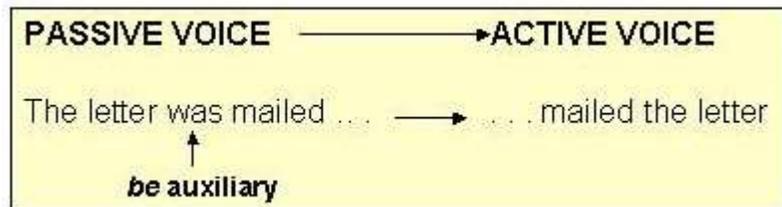
# Lesson 4. Active and Passive Voice

To change a passive voice sentence into an active voice sentence, simply reverse the previous steps.

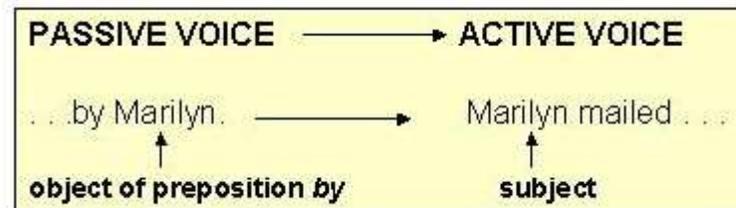
1. Move the passive sentence's subject into the active sentence's direct object slot



2. Remove the auxiliary verb **be** from the main verb and change main verb's form if needed



3. Place the passive sentence's object of the preposition **by** into the subject slot.



Because it is more direct, most writers prefer to use the active voice whenever possible.

# Lesson 4. Active and Passive Voice

**Transform the following sentences using active voice into passive voice.**

1. Someone had broken the window by 3:00 p.m.
2. A strange man was watching us.
3. Tokyo hosted the Olympics in 2020.
4. We are working on the report right now.
5. My manager has told him to arrive earlier.
6. They could not have made the mistake.
7. I hope they are going to hire me soon.
8. John's mother raised him in a small town.
9. Someone painted the building last year.
10. Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin in 1928.
11. Some students study grammar on the Internet.
12. Heavy rain had caused the flood.
13. Police officers were examining the evidence.
14. A spokesman gave an interview to the reporters.
15. We are going to announce the results on Friday.
16. The new manager has made some changes.
17. The students are setting decorations for the party.
18. The secretary opens the mail every morning.
19. Where did they invent gun powder ?
20. People speak English all over the world.
21. When did they translate this book into English ?
22. Have they delivered the new music system yet ?
23. You can obtain further information at the desk.
24. They won't take a decision until the next meeting.
25. You must put coins into the slot machine.
26. George told me about the incident at dinner.

# Lesson 4. Active and Passive Voice

## Did You Know?

Walt Disney has won the most Oscars ever: 26.



The Academy Awards **are given** out every year to recognize outstanding work of movie actors, directors, and others who are part of the movie-making industry.

These awards, called Oscars, **are presented** in a formal ceremony in Hollywood. Several people **are nominated** in specific categories, such as Best Movie, Best Actor, Best Music, and Best Costumes. One nominee **is chosen** to receive an award in each category.

When the awards ceremony started in 1929, 15 awards **were presented** and the ceremony **was attended** by only 250 people. Tickets cost \$10, and anyone who could afford a ticket could attend. Today about two dozen Oscars **are presented**. Tickets **are no longer sold** to the general public; invitations **are sent** only to people involved in making the movies and to their guests. Today the awards **are presented** in the 3400-seat Kodak Theatre in Hollywood.

Until 1941, the winners' names **were already known** before the ceremony and **published** in newspapers the night before the ceremony. Now the winners' names **are placed** in sealed envelopes and the envelopes **are not opened** until the night of the ceremony.

Since 1953, Oscar night **has been televised** and **broadcast** all over the world. This show **is seen** by hundreds of millions of people. Viewers watch as their favorite movie stars arrive looking beautiful and hopeful.

Read the article and pay attention to the sentences in passive voice. Transform the sentences in active voice if possible and restate the article.

Note that some sentences in passive voice is not possible to be transformed to active voice.

Eg.

***Colorful parrots live in the forest.***

This sentence cannot be changed to passive voice because the sentence does not have a direct object.

# Lesson 4. Active and Passive Voice

Write an active sentence and a passive sentence for each subject.  
Choose an appropriate tense.

1. Active: English \_\_\_\_\_.  
Passive: English \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Active: Some people \_\_\_\_\_.  
Passive: Some people \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Active: Movies \_\_\_\_\_.  
Passive: Movies \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Active: A national leader \_\_\_\_\_.  
Passive: A national leader \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Active: COVID-19 \_\_\_\_\_.  
Passive: COVID-19 \_\_\_\_\_.

**The End**