

The Writing Center

DLA: The Passive Voice



This DLA is a writable PDF form. You can enter your answers directly into this document.

YOU MUST DOWNLOAD AND SAVE THIS FILE TO YOUR COMPUTER.

Do not complete this form in a web browser. You will not be able to save your work.

Student Name:

Important Note

To get completion credit for this DLA, make sure you complete all the required activities. If you'd like help while working on a specific DLA, you can meet with a specialist at the Writing Center. Keep in mind that you might need to schedule a second appointment to review your work, check your understanding, and get your completion credit. You can only review **ONE** DLA per appointment. (Check the last section of this DLA for information on making your appointment and receiving completion credit for your work).

Activities (approximately 1 hour)

Read the information, complete the activities that follow, and be prepared to discuss your answers when you meet with a tutor.

Understanding Passive Voice

We use the passive voice when we want to focus on the object (the person or thing *receiving* the action) and NOT the agent (the person or thing *doing* the action). In other words, the person or thing doing the action is not the grammatical subject of the sentence. To understand this idea, let's look at the differences between an active and a passive sentence.

Active Sentence	Passive Sentence
Briana carried Joshua.	Joshua was carried by Briana.

Notice that in the active sentence, the agent is at the beginning of the sentence. It is the subject. In the passive sentence, the object is at the beginning of the sentence. Also, notice that the verb changes from an *active verb* to a **passive verb**.

Transitive vs. Intransitive Verbs

You can only make a passive sentence when you have a transitive verb. A transitive verb is not complete without a direct object.

Incomplete	Complete
The boy <i>broke</i> .	The boy <i>broke</i> the window.
She will <i>throw</i> .	She will <i>throw</i> the ball.
The teacher <i>gives</i> every Friday.	The teacher <i>gives</i> a test every Friday.

Intransitive verbs do not need a direct object.

❖ **Complete:** The train has arrived.

Because intransitive verbs do not take direct objects, only transitive verbs can be made passive.

Active Sentence	Passive Sentence
The boy broke the window.	The window was broken by the boy.

How to Form the Passive Voice: {a form of be + past participle}

To form the passive voice:

You need a sentence with a *transitive verb* (a verb that takes an **object**).

1. Ex→ **My neighbor** watches **my kids** every day after school.

Put the object at the front of the sentence and the agent after the verb, adding **by** before it.

2. Ex→ **My kids** watches by **my neighbor** every day after school.

You need a form of *be* (in any tense, with any modal, as a gerund, as an infinitive, etc.). When you are switching from an active sentence to a passive one, look at the active verb. The verb *be* must be in the *same tense or form*. The verb *be* in the passive sentence must agree with its new subject.

3. Ex→ *watches* (simple present; agrees with **my neighbor**) = **are** (simple present; agrees with **my kids**)

You need to put the main verb in its past participle form.

4. Ex→ *watch* = **watched**

Final sentence: **My kids** are **watched by** **my neighbor** every day after school. **

Remember, the verb *be* is in the *same form* as the active verb, and the main verb is in its past participle form.

The table below shows some examples. In the active sentences, the main verb is *make*. In the passive sentences, the form of *be* is:

- the same tense as *make* is in the active sentences
- followed by **made**, which is the **past participle** of *make*.

Verb Tense	Active Sentence	Passive Sentence
Simple Present	He <i>makes</i> breakfast.	Breakfast <i>is made</i> by him.*
Present Progressive	He <i>is making</i> breakfast.	Breakfast <i>is being made</i> by him.
Simple Past	He <i>made</i> breakfast.	Breakfast <i>was made</i> by him.
Present Perfect	He <i>has made</i> breakfast.	Breakfast <i>has been made</i> by him.
Future	He <i>will make</i> breakfast.	Breakfast <i>will be made</i> by him.
Modal	He <i>should make</i> breakfast.	Breakfast <i>should be made</i> by him.

*Agents that are subject pronouns (*I, you, he, she, it, they, we*) in the active voice become object pronouns (*me, you, him, her, it, them, us*) in the passive voice.

Do not use the past form of the verb. You need to use the past participle, which sometimes looks like the past form, but other times it does not. Here are some verbs and their past participles:

Simple Form	Past Participle	Simple Form	Past Participle	Simple Form	Past Participle
awake	awoken	get	gotten	see	seen
be	been	give	given	sell	sold
become	become	go	gone	send	sent
begin	begun	grow	grown	sing	sung
blow	blown	have	had	sit	sat
break	broken	hear	heard	sleep	slept
buy	bought	keep	kept	speak	spoken
catch	caught	know	known	stand	stood
choose	chosen	lay	laid	steal	stolen
come	come	leave	left	sweep	swept
do	done	lie	lain	swim	swum
draw	drawn	lose	lost	take	taken
drink	drunk	make	made	teach	taught
drive	driven	mean	meant	tell	told
eat	eaten	meet	met	think	thought
fall	fallen	pay	paid	throw	thrown
feel	felt	ride	ridden	understand	understood
find	found	rise	risen	wear	worn
fly	flown	run	run	win	won
forget	forgotten	say	said	write	written

The Agent

We use the passive voice when the agent is either unknown or unimportant.

Active Sentence	Passive Sentence
Someone has <i>stolen</i> my car.	My car has been stolen . (We don't know who did it.)

In the passive voice, we do not mention the agent when it is obvious or general.

Active Sentence	Passive Sentence
The teacher <i>will give</i> the test at noon.	The test will be given at noon by the teacher . (It's obvious that the teacher will give the test.)
People speak German in Austria.	German is spoken in Austria by people . (People is a general word.)

Only mention the agent when it is **specific**. Introduce the agent with the word *by*.

Active Sentence	Passive Sentence
John Wilkes Booth <i>assassinated</i> Abraham Lincoln.	Abraham Lincoln was assassinated by John Wilkes Booth. (John Wilkes Booth is a specific person.)

Passive versus Active

How do you know if you need an active verb or a passive verb? First, look at the subject of the sentence. Did the subject do the action? If so, you need an active verb. If the subject did not do the action, you need a passive verb.

Active Sentence	Passive Sentence
The dog bit the boys. (The dog did the action)	The boys were bitten by the dog. (The boys did not do the action.)

Activities

Check off each box once you have completed the activity.

1. Passive Voice Review

Review the information on this sheet. Then, answer the following questions.

What is the passive voice?

How do you form the passive voice?

2. Online Quiz

Go to <http://tinyurl.com/passivevoicedlaquiz> and take the DLA quiz. You must score at least 75% on the quiz before meeting with a specialist. After you complete the task, please take a screenshot of the page that has your score and show it to your specialist. Do not exit the quiz until you take the screenshot.

Choose 3a or 3b Below

3a. Review Your Own Writing

Collect some of your graded work. Find examples of active sentences that have transitive verbs (in different tenses!) and write them down. Then, make them passive.

1. Active:

Passive:

2. Active:

Passive:

3. Active:

Passive:

If you do not have your own essay to work with, please complete the supplemental activity below (3b).

3b. Passive Voice Sentence Practice

Look at the subject in the following sentences. Is it the agent or the object? Is it doing the action or not? Place the verbs in parentheses in the correct form—either active or passive.

English
(subject) at Mt. San Antonio College.

People
(subject) Portuguese in Brazil.

Following the steps on page 2 of this handout, change these active sentences into passive sentences. Mention the agent only when it is necessary.

1. People grow bananas in Ecuador.
2. NASA will hire Glen.
3. Sofia had already taken out the trash.
4. Students may not take the test at another time

4. Review the DLA/Receive Completion Credit

1. Go to [EAB Navigate](#) and make an appointment (online or in-person).
2. Attend your session and be prepared to explain your understanding of the information you've learned in the DLA. Consider the main concept you learned and how you might use this in your future assignments/classes.
3. If your professor asks you to provide proof, you can review the “appointment summary report” through EAB Navigate (app or desktop). You will find all Writing Center appointments under “appointment summary reports” (app or desktop). Look for the summary report for your DLA appointment. This is where your writing specialist will indicate the title of your DLA and state whether it is “completed” or “not completed.” If it is marked as “not completed,” book a follow up appointment to complete.

Note: Appointment summary reports are also sent weekly to your instructor on record. If there is an issue, please contact us at writingcenter@mtsac.edu or (909) 274-5325.

If you are an individual with a disability and need a greater level of accessibility for any document in The Writing Center or on The Writing Center's website, please contact the Mt. SAC Accessible Resource Centers for Students, access@mtsac.edu, (909) 274-4290.

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