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**Passive Voice Examples & Exercises – Present / Past**

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**Passive Voice: Definition**

In the active voice, the subject of the sentence **DOES the action:**

* **John painted** the **house** last week.  
  **Subject / verb / object**

In the passive voice, the subject of the sentence **RECEIVES the action.**

* The **house was painted**last week.  
  **Subject / ver**

Notice that the **object** of the active sentence (house) became the **subject** of the passive sentence.

**Passive Voice: Use**

The passive voice is used when:

1. **We do not know who did the action**  
   Example: The documents were stolen.  
   (we don’t know who stole the documents)
2. **The receiver of the action is more important**Example: The pyramids were built nearly 5,000 years ago by the ancient Egyptians.  
   (we want to emphasize “pyramids” more than “ancient Egyptians”)

**Passive Voice: Form**

To change an active voice sentence to a passive voice sentence:

1. Make the object of the active sentence into the subject of the passive sentence.
2. Use the verb “to be” in the same tense as the main verb of the active sentence.
3. Use the past participle of the main verb of the active sentence.

Here are some active and passive voice examples to help!

* **Active:** People drink champagne on New Year’s Eve.  
  **Passive:** Champagne **is drunk** on New Year’s Eve.
* **Active:** Chefs use these machines to mix the ingredients.  
  **Passive:** These machines**are used** to mix the ingredients.
* **Active:** They renovated the restaurant in 2004.  
  **Passive:** The restaurant **was renovated** in 2004.
* **Active:** The teachers informed the students that the class had been cancelled.  
  **Passive:** The students **were informed** that the class had been cancelled.

**Passive Voice: Present**

In the present, the passive voice uses the verbs **is** and**are**+ past participle of the main verb.

The passive voice present is often used to describe:

* **Processes**  
  First the apples **are picked**, then they **are cleaned**, and finally they’**re packed** and **shipped** to the market.
* **General thoughts, opinions, and beliefs**New York **is considered** the most diverse city in the U.S.  
  **It is believed** that Amelia Earhart’s plane crashed in Pacific Ocean.  
  Hungarian **is seen** as one of the world’s most difficult languages to learn.  
  Skin cancers **are thought** to be caused by excessive exposure to the sun.

**Passive Voice: Past**

In the past, the passive voice uses the verbs **was** and**were** + past participle of the main verb.

The passive voice past is often used to describe:

* **Events in history**  
  George Washington **was elected** president in 1788.
* **Crimes / Accidents**  
  Two people **were killed** in a drive-by shooting on Friday night.  
  Ten children **were injured** when part of the school roof collapsed.

…

as well as in many other situations when the person who did the action is unknown or unimportant.