

## Lesson: Active and Passive Voice

### Learning Targets

- Use verbs in the active and passive voice to achieve particular effects (e.g., emphasizing the actor or the action).
- Choose language that expresses ideas precisely and concisely, recognizing and eliminating wordiness and redundancy.

### Active and Passive Voice

**Voice** tells you whether the subject of the verb performs or receives the action of the verb. If the subject performs the action, the verb is in **active voice**. In **passive voice**, the subject of the verb receives the action or is the object of the action.

**Active voice:** The girl **sings** a song. [The subject, *girl*, performs the action of singing.]

**Passive voice:** The song **is sung** by the girl. [The subject, *song*, does not perform the action of singing. It is the object of the action, which means that it receives the action.]

A verb in the passive voice includes a form of the verb *be*, a past participle of a verb, and any needed helping verbs. Here are examples of sentences in each tense, showing active-voice and passive-voice verbs.

Tense	Passive Voice	Active Voice
Present	The song <b>is sung</b> . The songs <b>are sung</b> .	The girl <b>sings</b> the song. The girls <b>sing</b> the song.
Past	The song <b>was sung</b> . The songs <b>were sung</b> .	The girl (or girls) <b>sang</b> the song.
Future	The song (or songs) <b>will be sung</b> .	The girl (or girls) <b>will sing</b> the song.
Present Perfect	The song <b>has been sung</b> . The songs <b>have been sung</b> .	The girl <b>has sung</b> the song. The girls <b>have sung</b> the song.
Past Perfect	The song (or songs) <b>had been sung</b> .	The girl (or girls) <b>had sung</b> the song.
Future Perfect	The song (or songs) <b>will have been sung</b> .	The girl (or girls) <b>will have sung</b> the song.

Active voice is usually more direct and clear. In most sentences, you should use active voice. However, you may use passive voice when you want to emphasize the action or the recipient of the action, or when you do not know who performed the action. You may also use passive voice to avoid pointing fingers or naming names.

**Active voice:** Sara Jones **broke** that vase last night.

**Passive voice:** That vase **was broken** last night.

Use the voice that best achieves your purpose with the fewest words.

**Wordy and awkward:** By then, the question **will have been asked** by the students and the answer **will have been heard** by them.

**Better:** By then, the students **will have asked** the question and **heard** the answer.

## Check Your Understanding

Revise the following sentences, changing passive-voice verbs to active-voice verbs.

**EXAMPLE:** The energy was captured by the windmills.

The windmills **captured the energy**.

1. The kayaks had been loaded onto the car by Mark.
2. The trip to the store was made by Michael.
3. Most of the cooking was done by the adults.
4. Games were organized by Elaine, Nichole, and the kids.
5. What will have been done by Ranjan and Abby?