

Lesson: Active and Passive Voice

Learning Targets

- Form and use verbs in the active and passive voice.
- Recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in verb voice.
- Use verbs in the active and passive voice to achieve particular effects (e.g., emphasizing the actor or the action).

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 squirrel **buries** a pecan. [The subject, *squirrel*, performs the action of burying.]

Passive voice: The pecan **is buried** by the squirrel. [The subject, *pecan*, does not perform the action of burying. 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.

Tense	Examples of Passive Voice
Present	The pecan is buried . The pecans are buried .
Past	The pecan was buried . The pecans were buried .
Future	The pecan (or pecans) will be buried .
Present Perfect	The pecan has been buried . The pecans have been buried .
Past Perfect	The (pecan or pecans) had been buried .
Future Perfect	The pecan (or pecans) will have been buried .

Lesson: Active and Passive Voice (continued)

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: John Smith **made** several mistakes.

Passive voice: Several mistakes **were made**.

Use the voice that best achieves your purpose with the fewest words. Do not shift between active and passive voice unnecessarily.

Unnecessary shift: We **worked** in the yard, and several bags of leaves **were raked up**.

Better: We **worked** in the yard and **raked up** several bags of leaves.

Check Your Understanding

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

Answers may vary slightly. Sample answers are given.

EXAMPLE: The trees were climbed by Max and Ben.

Max and Ben **climbed** the trees.

1. The main dish was made by Olivia.

Olivia **made the main dish**.

2. The virus will have been detected by my computer by then.

My computer **will have detected the virus by then**.

3. Our cat has been chased by the neighbor's dog.

The neighbor's dog **has chased our cat**.

4. The fog was produced by rapidly warming temperatures and high humidity.

Rapidly warming temperatures and high humidity **produced the fog**.

5. Several assignments were missed by Gavin when he was out sick.

Gavin **missed several assignments when he was out sick**.