

# 13 Active and Passive Voice

Some sentences can be written in two forms—in **Active Voice** or in **Passive Voice**. These sentences can be converted from the Active Voice to the Passive Voice and from the Passive Voice to the Active Voice. **As—**

**Active** : I read a book.

**Passive** : A book is read by me.

There are definite **Rules** for conversion from the **Active Voice to the Passive Voice**. But before discussing these Rules, it is essential to know some basic concepts.

## Conditions under which Conversion into the Passive Voice is not possible

1. The sentences in which the main verb is **Intransitive** cannot be converted into the Passive Voice. Only those sentences which have a Transitive Verb can be converted into the Passive Voice. For example, look at the following sentences—

1. I read.
2. We go.
3. They laugh.

These sentences **cannot be converted** into the Passive Voice because the Verbs used in them are Intransitive.

2. The sentences of **Future continuous Tense** cannot be converted into the Passive Voice.

3. No **Perfect Continuous Tense** of any Tense can be converted into the Passive Voice.

## Rules for Conversion from the Active to the Passive Voice

### Rule 1—Interchange of Subject and Object

While changing from the Active to the Passive Voice, the Subject is made the Object, and the object becomes the Subject in the Passive Voice. Also, **by** is used before the Subject when it is made

the Object in the Passive form. Sometimes **by** is kept **understood** or **implied** also. **As—**

**Active** : Ram loves Shyam.

**Passive** : Shyam is loved **by** Ram.

**Rule 2—** While interchanging the **Subject** and **Object** in the Passive Voice, the **Articles**, **Adjectives** and **Adjective Phrases** connected with each are also carried over with them. They are not separated either from the Subject or the Object. **As—**

**Active** : All the children heard an interesting story.

**Passive** : An interesting story was heard by all the children.

**Rule 3—** When the **Pronouns** are transferred from the place of **Object** in the Active Voice to the place of **Subject** in the Passive Voice, their form is changed as follows—

**I** in place of **Me**

**We** in place of **Us**

**He** in place of **Him**

**She** in place of **Her**

**They** in place of **Them**

**Note—** No change is made in the use of **You** or **It** or any **Noun**.

**Active** : Ram loves **her**.

**Passive** : **She** is loved by Ram.

**Active** : Mohan hates **them**.

**Passive** : **They** are hated by Mohan.

**Rule 4—** When the **Pronouns** are transferred from the place of **Subject** in the Active Voice to the place of **Object** in the Passive Voice, their form is changed as follows—

**By me** in place of **I**

**By us** in place of **We**

**By him** in place of **He**

By **her** in place of **She**

By **them** in place of **They**

**Note**—There is no change in **You, It** or any **Noun**, but **by** is added before them.

**Active** : **We** love the child.

**Passive** : The child is loved **by us**.

**Active** : **I** see a bird.

**Passive** : A bird is seen **by me**.

**Active** : **You** write a letter.

**Passive** : A letter is written **by you**.

### Rules for Change in Verbs

**Rule 5**—The following changes are made in the **Verb**—

(i) The main Verb is used in the **Third (Past Participle) Form**.

(ii) An appropriate Verb 'to be' (**is, are, am, was, were, be, been, being**) is used before the Third Form of the main Verb according to the **Number** and **Person** of the Subject and **Tense** of the Verb.

The different forms of the Verb '**to be**' used with the Verb **Love**, for illustration, are given in the following **Table**—

**Verb 'to be' + Love in Passive Voice**

<b>Tense</b>	<b>Indefinite</b>	<b>Continuous</b>	<b>Perfect</b>	<b>Perfect</b>
Present	am loved	am being loved	have been loved	No Passive Voice
	is loved	is being loved	has been loved	No Passive Voice
	are loved	are being loved	have been loved	No Passive Voice
Past	was loved	was being loved	had been loved	No Passive Voice
	were loved	were being loved	had been loved	No Passive Voice
	will be loved	×	will have been loved	No Passive Voice
Future	shall be loved	×	shall have been loved	No Passive Voice

### Examples

#### A. Present Tense

(i) **Indefinite :**

**Active** : He reads a book.

**Passive** : A book is read by him.

**Active** : Ram writes letters.

**Passive** : Letters are written by Ram.

**Active** : Ram follows me.

**Passive** : I am followed by Ram.

You will see from the Table above that **am, is, or are** have been used before the Third Form of the main Verb according to the Number and Person of the Subject.

#### Structure of the Verb :

Am / Is / Are + V<sub>3</sub> (Third Form of the Verb)

(ii) **Continuous :**

**Active** : He is writing a letter.

**Passive** : A letter is being written by him.

**Active** : They are reading books.

**Passive** : Books are being read by them.

**Active** : Ram is helping me.

**Passive** : I am being helped by Ram.

The **Structure** of the Verb in this Tense is :

**is/ am/ are + being** + III form of the Verb.

(iii) **Perfect :**

**Active** : Ram has written a letter.

**Passive** : A letter has been written by Ram.

**Active** : Mohan has read many books.

**Passive** : Many books have been read by Mohan.

**Active** : He has helped me.

**Passive** : I have been helped by him.

The **Structure** of the Verb in this Tense is :

**Has/ have + been** + III form of the Verb.

#### B. Past Tense

(i) **Simple Past Tense / Indefinite Past Tense :**

**Active** : Ram wrote a letter.

**Passive** : A letter was written by Ram.

**Active** : Ram read many books.

**Passive** : Many books were read by Ram.

**Active** : He helped me.

**Passive** : I was helped by him.

The **Structure** of the Verb in this Tense is :

**Was/ were** + III form of the Verb.

(ii) **Past Continuous :**

**Active** : Ram was writing a letter.

**Passive** : A letter was being written by Ram.

**Active** : Hari was reading a book.

**Passive** : A book was being read by Hari.

**Active** : Ram was helping me.

**Passive** : I was being helped by Ram.

The **Structure** of the Verb in this Tense is :

**Was/ were + being + III form of the Verb.**

### (iii) Past Perfect :

**Active** : Ram had written a letter.

**Passive** : A letter had been written by Ram.

**Active** : Ram had read many books.

**Passive** : Many books had been read by Ram.

**Active** : Ram had helped me.

**Passive** : I had been helped by Ram.

The **Structure** of the Verb in this Tense is :

**Had + been + III form of the Verb.**

## C. Future Tense

### (i) Future Indefinite :

**Active** : Ram will write a letter.

**Passive** : A letter will be written by Ram.

**Active** : Ram will read books.

**Passive** : Books will be read by Ram.

**Active** : Ram will help me.

**Passive** : I shall be helped by Ram.

The **Structure** of the Verb in this Tense is :

**Will/ shall + be + III form of the Verb.**

### (ii) Future Perfect Tense :

**Active** : Ram will have written a letter.

**Passive** : A letter will have been written by Ram.

**Active** : Ram will have read many books.

**Passive** : Many books will have been read by Ram.

**Active** : Ram will have helped me.

**Passive** : I shall have been helped by Ram.

The **Structure** of the Verb in this Tense is :

**Will/ shall + have been + III form of the Verb.**

**Note**—In Present Perfect Continuous, Past Perfect Continuous and Future Continuous and Future Perfect Continuous Tense there can be no conversion from the Active to the Passive Voice.

**Rule 6**—In sentences in which auxiliary Verbs **can / could / may / might / should / would** are used with Finite Verbs, the auxiliaries are retained as they are, and they are followed by **be + Third Form** of the Verb. **Structure** of the Verb in the Passive Voice is :

Auxiliary Verb (unchanged) + be + V<sub>3</sub> **As**—

**Active** : They can help you.

**Passive** : You can be helped by them.

**Active** : She should help Sita.

**Passive** : Sita should be helped by her.

**Rule 7**—In some sentences Verb 'to be' (**am, is, are, was, were**) is followed by **has / have / had**, which are followed by an **Infinitive (to + Verb)**. While converting, such sentences into the Passive Voice, Verb 'to be' and **has / have / had** are retained in the form appropriate to the **subject**, after which are used **to be + Verb** in the **Third Form**.

The **Structure** of the Verb would be :

Verb 'to be + to be + V<sub>3</sub>

Has / have or had + to be + V<sub>3</sub> **As**—

**Active** : I am to help him.

**Passive** : He is to be helped by me.

**Active** : She has to help me.

**Passive** : I have to be helped by her.

**Active** : He was to bring you here.

**Passive** : You were to be brought here by him.

**Rule 8**—Sometimes an **Intransitive Verb** joined with a **Preposition** does the work of a Transitive Verb. Sentences using this type of Verb are converted into the Passive Voice according to the normal Rules, keeping in mind that the Preposition must be retained with the Verb. **As**—

**Active** : She looks after him.

**Passive** : He is looked after by her.

**Active** : They laughed at him.

**Passive** : He was laughed at by them.

**Rule 9**—Some sentences have **two** objects—

(i) Direct (or Inanimate) object, (ii) Indirect (or Animate) object. **As**—

‘She teaches **me grammar**.’

Here ‘grammar’ is Direct Object and ‘me’ is Indirect Object.

While converting such sentences into the Passive Voice, the Indirect (or animate) object should be used as the Subject.

**As**—

**Active** : She teaches me Hindi.

**Passive** : I am taught Hindi by her.

**Active** : They gave you a prize.

**Passive** : You were given a prize by them.

**Active** : I shall give you necessary help.

**Passive** : You will be given necessary help by me.

**Note**—Sometimes, however, **Direct** (or Inanimate) Object can also be used as the Subject in the Passive Voice. **As**—

**Active** : He teaches me Hindi.

**Passive** : I am taught Hindi by him.

Or

Hindi is taught to me by him.

**Rule 10**—Some sentences containing **double objects** begin with **Let** in the Active Voice. In Passive Voice also these sentences begin with **Let**, and the **Direct** (Inanimate) object is used as the Subject. Also, **be** should be used before the Third Form of the Verb. **As**—

**Active** : Let him bring a glass of water.

**Passive** : Let a glass of water be brought by him.

### Conversion of Imperative Sentences into Passive Voice

**Rule 11**—If the Imperative sentence carries the sense of **order** or **command**, its Passive Voice should begin with **Let**, and **be** should be used **before the Third Form** of the Verb. **As**—

**Active** : Bring the pen.

**Passive** : Let the pen be brought.

**Active** : Shut the door.

**Passive** : Let the door be shut.

**Active** : Show the papers.

**Passive** : Let the papers be shown.

**Rule 12**—If the Imperative sentence carries the sense of **request** or **advice**, **should be** must be used before the **Third Form** of the Verb. These sentences do not begin with **Let**. **As**—

**Active** : Help the poor.

**Passive** : The poor should be helped.

**Active** : Feed the child.

**Passive** : The child should be fed.

**Active** : Love your country.

**Passive** : Your country should be loved.

**Note**—In Passive Voice expressions such as **Please, Kindly**, etc. are left out.

**Rule 13**—If the Imperative sentence is **Negative**, the Passive Voice should have **Let not** in place of **Do not**. Also, after the Subject **be + Third Form** of the Verb should be used. **As**—

**Active** : Do not read a bad novel.

**Passive** : Let not a bad novel be read by you.

**Active** : Do not beat the child.

**Passive** : Let not the child be beaten.

**Active** : Do not defend the thief.

**Passive** : Let not the thief be defended.

**Rule 14**—Conversion of Negative Sentences into Passive Voice

**Negative Sentences** are converted into the Passive Voice just like the **Affirmative sentences**. **Not** is retained at its normal position, i.e. after the first auxiliary Verb. **As**—

**Active** : The boy did not kill the cat.

**Passive** : The cat was not killed by the boy.

**Active** : The baby was not hitting a toy.

**Passive** : A toy was not being hit by the baby.

**Active** : This boy cannot lift the box.

**Passive** : The box cannot be lifted by this boy.

**Rule 15**—Conversion of Interrogative Sentences into Passive Voice

If the Interrogative sentence begins with a Helping Verb (**do, does, did, is, was, were**,

are, am, has, have, had), the Passive Voice also begins with the Helping Verb, but the form of the helping Verb changes according to the new Subject in the Passive Voice.

**Note**—(i) **Has, have, had** take **been** before the **Third Form** of the Verb.

(ii) Interrogative sentences beginning with an **Interrogative Pronoun / Adverb** (**Who, What, Whom**, etc.) begin in the Passive Voice with **by whom** or **By / with what**. **As**—

**Active** : Does he help Ram ?

**Passive** : Is Ram helped by him ?

**Active** : Has he killed the dog ?

**Passive** : Has the dog been killed by him ?

**Active** : Who has deceived you ?

**Passive** : By whom have you been deceived ?

**Active** : What pleased you so much ?

**Passive** : With what were you pleased so much ?

### Some Other Structures

**Rule 16**—Usually **by** is used before the Object in the Passive Voice. But there are some Verbs on account of which some **other Prepositions** are used before the Object in place of **by**. **As**—

(i) **'at'** is used after : Surprised, astonished, shocked, alarmed, disappointed, displeased, distressed

(ii) **'to'** is used after : Known and obliged

(iii) **'With'** is used after : Pleased, satisfied, disgusted, impressed

(iv) **'in'** is used after : Interested, consisted, contained

**Active** : Her behaviour disappointed me.

**Passive** : I was disappointed at her behaviour.

**Active** : His condition alarmed me.

**Passive** : I was alarmed at his condition.

**Active** : I know his sister.

**Passive** : His sister is known to me.

**Active** : Your honesty has pleased me.

**Passive** : I have been pleased with your honesty.

**Active** : This job interests me.

**Passive** : I am interested in this job.

**Active** : Your talk displeases me.

**Passive** : I am displeased at your talk.

**Rule 17**—Some sentences begin with **'There'**, followed by **Verb + Subject + Infinitive**. **No change** is made in such sentences in the Passive voice except that the Simple Present Infinitive is changed into the **Past Infinitive (to be + Past Participle)**. The rest of the sentence remains unchanged. **As**—

**Active** : **There** is no milk **to waste**.

**Passive** : There is no milk **to be wasted**.

**Active** : There is no time **to waste**.

**Passive** : There is no time **to be wasted**.

**Rule 18**—In some sentences **Infinitive without 'to'** is used. **As**—

**Active** : I made him run away.

**Passive** : He was made to run away.

In sentences of this pattern **normal Rules** are applied for conversion into the Passive Voice, with one more provision that **Infinitive with 'to'** is used in place of **Infinitive without 'to'**. The structure of the main Verb would be—

### to 'be' + Past Participle

Here are some more sentences of this pattern—

**Active** : We saw him jump the ditch.

**Passive** : He was seen to jump the ditch.

**Active** : He let me go.

**Passive** : I was let go.

**Note**—It may be noted here that **'to'** is not used after **'let'** even in the Passive Voice.

**Rule 19**—In some sentences **that + a Noun clause** is used after the Principal clause, and this Noun clause is the Object of the Transitive Verb in the Principal clause. Some special care has to be taken in converting such sentences into the Passive Voice. In such sentences no Passive Voice is made of the Principal clause, only its sense is expressed in some way. Then the **Noun clause** is changed into the Passive Voice according to normal Rules. In such sentences we don't usually use **by + object**. **As**—

**Active** : We know that he is a great scholar.

**Passive** : He is known to be a great scholar.

**Active** : It is believed that he is absolutely honest.

**Passive** : He is believed to be absolutely honest.

**Note**—The Verbs after which a Noun clause can be used as the object are these—

Know, say, believe, think, consider, find, claim, report, hold, etc.

**Rule 20**—Sometimes in the sentences of the above pattern, the Noun clause is already in the Passive Voice. **As**—

‘He wants that he should be recognized as a great scholar.’

In converting such sentences into the Passive Voice, the Principal clause is retained unchanged. The **that + Subject + Verb** of the Noun clause are removed. After the Verb of the Principal clause we should use **to be + Third Form** of the Verb of the Noun clause. **As**—

**Active** : He wants that he should be recognized as a great scholar.

**Passive** : He wants to be recognized as a great scholar.

**Active** : He desires that he should be respected by all.

**Passive** : He desires to be respected by all.

### Exercise 1

**Change the following sentences into Passive Voice :**

1. He killed a serpent.
2. I can pardon you this time.
3. He does not like music.
4. A dog was chasing a cat.
5. She was writing a letter.
6. She will forgive him.
7. I know my friend very well.
8. He has given up all his bad habits.
9. The President will give him a medal.
10. We should love our country.
11. He can never discover the fact.
12. He may appoint you.
13. You have done your duty.
14. Bring a glass of water.
15. Never tell a lie.

### Exercise 2

**Change the following sentences from Active into Passive Voice :**

1. They are singing a song.
2. He will have written a poem.
3. Does she love flowers ?
4. Do you know him ?
5. Does he ever read a book ?
6. Fear God.
7. Forgive the innocent.
8. I am to help him.
9. They are to support me.
10. Has he written a play ?
11. Have they closed the factory ?
12. I am going to build a house.
13. Open the main gate.
14. I shall have finished my book.
15. He has given up smoking.

### Exercise 3

**Change the following sentences into Passive Voice :**

1. He kept me waiting.
2. The man is crossing the river.
3. He told me to leave the room.
4. The Principal is watching you very carefully.
5. You promised me a present.
6. We saw the storm approaching.
7. The nurse looks after the patients.
8. Don't look down upon the poor.
9. She brought up the orphan child.
10. He gave me a new book.
11. I showed him the best house.
12. Do you know him ?
13. There is no money to spare.
14. We saw him fight with a sword.
15. They let the prisoner go.
16. People know that he is a cheat.
17. They believe that he is dead.
18. He claims that he is the real successor.
19. The old man wants that he should be loved and respected.
20. Every poor man wants that he should be helped.