

Active and **passive verbs**

What was
said just
now?



Subject and object (revision)

What is the **subject** of each of these sentences?

The dog barked.

The dog bit me.

I bit the dog.

You must get off the bus.

This bus goes to Leeds.

I am a dog.

The dog barked.

The dog bit me.

I bit the dog.

You must get off the bus.

This bus goes to Leeds.

I am a dog.

Note: the subject isn't always a person: **The tree** fell on Andi.

Subject and object (revision)

What is the **object** of each of these sentences? Do they all have an object?

The dog barked.

The dog bit me.

I bit the dog.

You must go to Leeds on the bus.

I'm sharpening my pencil.

Get a new pencil.

The dog barked.

The dog bit **me**.

I bit **the dog**.

You must go to Leeds on the bus.

I'm sharpening **my pencil**.

Get **a new pencil**.

Have a think...



Every sentence must have a subject.

True or false?

If you think it's false, give an example of a correctly formed sentence which has **no subject**.

We sometimes use very short sentences where there is no subject or object, for example:

Yes / No

What about this sentence:

The cheese was eaten.



Have a think...

Every sentence must have an object.

True or false?

If you think it's false, give an example of a correctly formed sentence which has **no object**.

As before, one word sentences might not have a subject or an object:

Yes / No

What about this imperative sentence?

Watch out!

All in order...



object - subject - verb :

What is their usual order in an English sentence?

Subject

Verb

Object

Sentences written like this are in the active voice

Passive voice

The passive voice lets us use the object of the action as the subject of the sentence.

You might also see it explained this way:

The object of the sentence acts on the subject.

Or:

The object of the sentence moves to the usual subject position.



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The dog bit me.
(active verb)

I was bitten by
the dog. (passive
verb)

Turn these active verb sentences into passive verb sentences:

Bees make honey.

Honey is ...



The sun warmed and dried him.

A passing herd of buffalo nearly flattened us.

A projecting ledge of rock broke my fall.

Honey is made by bees.

He was warmed and dried by the sun.

We were nearly flattened by a passing herd of buffalo.

My fall was broken by a projecting ledge of rock.

Turn these passive verb sentences into active verb sentences:

My fall was broken by a projecting ledge of rock.



A projecting ledge of rock broke my fall.

The robbers were seen by a member of the public.

A member of the public saw the robbers.

Grammar nerds' corner

- Passive verbs can be in any tense: past, present, future and so on.
- That's why it is not called the passive "tense" but the **passive voice** of the verb.
- *Examples: It amuses me* – present tense, active voice.
- **I am amused** – present tense, passive voice.
- **I was amused** – past tense, passive voice.

Identify the tense and voice of the verbs in these sentences:

I missed the bus yesterday.

John will be asked to leave.

My hamster eats too much.

My hamster was eaten by the cat.

My ears were assailed by a howling noise.

The dog was howling.

Style tips: (1) Don't overdo it!

What is this writer trying to say?

It is noted that your vehicle has been reported to have been parked improperly and you have consequently been issued with a penalty of £40 which must be paid in full within 30 days.

In plain English, this writer is saying four things:

1. You parked in the wrong place.
2. We are fining you £40.
3. Please pay within 30 days.
4. I am a pompous bureaucrat.

Style tips: (2) Use “be”, not “get”

In **spoken**

English, you
can hear
people
saying
things like:



“We got nicked,” or
*“That’s how these
things get done.”*

That’s OK in informal
speech – but **don’t use it
in your writing**, except in
dialogue.

In **standard written
English**, we use the
auxiliary verb (helping
verb) **“to be”** to form the
passive voice.

Not “to get”.

Rewrite these sentences, using the correct form of the passive voice for **standard written English**:

- I got stung by a wasp.
- Plants get pollinated by insects.
- Proteins get broken down by enzymes in our guts.
- Trespassers will get prosecuted.