Active & Passive Voice

Emma walked the dog.
The dog was walked by Emma.

The dog jumped over the hurdle.
The hurdle was jumped over by the dog.
Parts of a Clause

A **clause** is a group of words which contains a **verb**.
All **verbs** have a **subject**.

- Max threw
  - This clause is about Max.
- Emma ate
  - This clause is about Emma.
- The dog chased
  - This clause is about the dog.

In some **clauses** there is something the **verb** acts on.
This is called the **object**.
Identifying **Subject**, **Verb** and **Object**

**I lost my dog.**

**Raj looked for the dog.**

**He found her shut in a box.**

**Raj dragged the box.**

*Can you spot the subject, verb and object in these clauses?*
Active Voice

Max was doing the **pulling**.

The dog was doing the **eating**.

The dog was doing the **chasing**.

Max pulled the cart.

The dog ate the sandwich!

The dog chased the cat.
Passive Voice

Passive voice changes the emphasis of a sentence.

- This clause is about the glass.
  - The glass was broken by the dog.
- This clause is about the pie.
  - The pie was eaten by the dog.
- This clause is about the cat.
  - The cat was chased by the dog.

Passive voice is when the verb is done to the subject.
Passive Voice

The horn *was pressed* by the angry driver.

A secret *was revealed* when we opened the door.

The dog *was scared* by the clown.

Sometimes the person doing the action is not included in the sentence.

The horn *was pressed*.

The dog *was scared*.
Active and Passive Voice

The dog found a bone. **ACTIVE**
A bone was found by the dog. **PASSIVE**
The carpet was chewed by the dog. **PASSIVE**
The dog chewed the carpet. **ACTIVE**
The toys were hidden by the dog. **PASSIVE**
The dog hid the toys. **ACTIVE**

Which of these have an **active voice** and which have a **passive voice**?
Choosing Active and Passive Voice

You can change the emphasis of a sentence through the voice you use.

**ACTIVE:**

The dog chewed the carpet.

- emphasis on the dog

**PASSIVE:**

The carpet was chewed by the dog.

- emphasis on the carpet

The carpet was chewed.

- emphasis on the carpet – dog off the hook!
Choosing passive voice

Passive voice is sometimes used in **formal** or **generalised** writing...

*Five portions of fruit should be eaten every day.*

*Care must be taken when using power tools.*

*The mixture was stirred.*

or when elements are **unknown**

*My bag has been stolen.*

or to **hide** information

*The hospital was unavoidably closed.*

*Football cards have been banned at our school.*

---

ACTIVE:  
SUBJECT DOES  
THE VERB

PASSIVE:  
VERB DONE  
TO SUBJECT

By people in general.

It does not matter who stirred it.

I do not know who stole it.

I don’t want you to know who was responsible.
Explore more Hamilton Trust Learning Materials at [https://wrht.org.uk/hamilton/](https://wrht.org.uk/hamilton/).