

## Verbs: Active/Passive Voice

Verbs can be either in the active voice or in the passive voice.

Verbs are in the **ACTIVE** voice when the subject in the sentence actually does what the verb describes.

Mrs. Schmidt *invited* John and Sam to the cocktail party.

(Mrs. Schmidt is actually doing the inviting.)

Jane *called* me.

(Jane is actually doing the calling.)

Verbs are in the **PASSIVE** voice when the action described by the verb is done to the subject.

John and Sam were *invited* to the cocktail party by Mrs.Schmidt.

(John and Sam did not do the inviting. It was done to them.)

I was *called* by Jane.

(I did not do the calling. It was done to me.)

### Hints for Identifying Passive Verbs

Hint # 1: Passive verbs will always be formed with a be verb + a past participle.

- a. be verbs or verb phrases\* = be, being, been, is, are, was, were, am  
\* will be, is being, are being, has been,  
could have been (partial list)

\* **Be verb phrases** have *helping verbs* with the be verbs.

Refer to Packet 2 for a list of helping verbs.

**Important:** has, have, and had are **NOT be verbs**. They serve as either helping or action verbs.

- b. past participle = the third principal part of a verb – *without* its helper (has, have, had)

<u>Present</u>	<u>Past</u>	<u>Past Participle</u> **
see	saw	(has, have, had) seen
cause	caused	(has, have, had) caused
eat	ate	(has, have, had) eaten
throw	threw	(has, have, had) thrown
do	did	(has, have, had) done

\*\* Note that many, but not all, past-participle verbs end in n, en, ne. Also, if you want to test to see if a verb could be past participle, put has, have, or had in front of it. If it sounds right, it can serve as a past-participle verb.

**Examples:** My sister will do her work this evening.

To test if do is a past participle, place has in front of it. Does *have do* sound correct? Obviously, it doesn't. Therefore, the word do is not a past participle.

They had forgotten to do their homework.

Forgotten already has had in front of it and *had forgotten* sounds correct. Therefore, the word forgotten is a past participle.

### Examples of Passive Verbs

1. Bob *was seen* by Ted.  
    be verb = was +  
    past participle = seen  
    \* passive verb = was seen
2. The traffic jam *had been caused* by an accident.  
    be verb phrase = had been +  
    past participle = caused  
    \* passive verb = had been caused
3. The apple *will be eaten* by the teacher.  
    be verb phrase = will be +  
    past participle = eaten  
    \* passive verb = will be eaten
4. The papers *are thrown* in the trash each morning.  
    be verb = are +  
    past participle = thrown  
    \* passive verb = are thrown
5. Paper grading *is not done* by the professor.  
    be verb = is +  
    past participle = done  
    \* passive verb = is done

Hint # 2: Almost all passive verb sentences contain a *written* or *understood* by phrase – by the teacher, by the girl, by Tom, by me.

The noun or pronoun (the object) at the end of the by phrase is the *doer* of the action. Therefore, to change the passive verb to an action verb, rewrite the sentence using the object as the subject.

Please note that if the object is a pronoun (me, him, her, us, them, whom) you need to change the pronoun to the nominative case (I, he, she, we, they, who) to use it as the subject of the sentence.

### Examples:

Passive My sister *was hit by* Tom.  
(Take the noun Tom at the end of the by phrase and make it the subject of the sentence.)

Active Tom hit my sister.

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Passive The car door *was slammed* on my foot.  
(Although there is no written by phrase, it is understood that someone or something did the slamming, so we can add a by phrase.)

The car door *was slammed* on my foot *by Tom*.

OR

The car door *was slammed* on my foot *by me*.

OR

The car door *was slammed* on my foot *by the wind*.

Active Tom slammed the car door on my foot.

OR

I slammed the car door on my foot. (change me to I)

OR

The wind slammed the car door on my foot.

Hint # 3: Who is doing the action? Substitute the subject and the verb in the following question:

Did the (subject) do the (verb)ing? If yes, the verb is active. If no, the verb is passive.

Jane *called* me.

Did **Jane** do the **calling**?

Yes, verb is active.

I *was called* by Jane.

Did **I** do the **calling**?

No, verb is passive.

Try the following exercise to see if you can identify the passive verbs. Remember, you must have a BE verb and a PAST PARTICIPLE.

**Directions:**

Place **PV** on the blank line of those items that contain a **passive verb**. In these PASSIVE-VERB sentences *only*, **circle** the be verb or be verb phrase, **underline** the past participle, and **place parentheses** around the by phrase. If there is no by phrase, **write** one in.

**Examples:**

\_\_\_\_\_ The children were driven to school by Mom.

PV The children were driven to school (by Mom).

\_\_\_\_\_ The silent alarm had been accidentally tripped.

PV The silent alarm had been accidentally tripped (by the teller).

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Bob had remembered to call Mom for her birthday.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The book was returned to the library.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The accident was caused by the road conditions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Mary is going to go to school with her cousins.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. The job has been completed earlier than expected.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. The bus will be driven by one of the teachers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The doctor had called the patient to give her the good news.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The report had been sent to the wrong address.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I had sent the report to the wrong address.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. The award is being given to the student with the highest GPA.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. The town was gripped by fear during the accident at the nuclear power plant.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. One wall of my bedroom is covered by family photographs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. The fawn was struck as it crossed the turnpike.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. My doctor referred me to a specialist.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Margie's long hair had been cut.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. The teachers' strike was protested by the parents of the school.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. Bloodhounds had been tracking the escaped convicts for hours.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. The football team was given a standing ovation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. The stock clerk had dropped a gallon glass jar of pickles.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. The windows in the house stick easily.