

# PASSIVE VOICE

## TIM81

Materials used for educational purposes

Clara Cnudde





# Passive voice

The focus is on the action. It is not important or known who or what performs the action.

# 36 Active vs passive

## A Sample sentences

For our research studies we normally produce a preliminary analysis. We then publish the findings and circulate them to various experts. This is exactly what we did when we applied for the current patent. We are therefore very surprised that you have contacted us in this matter. We can assure you that we completed all the relevant documentation. In the meantime we will investigate your claims further.

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## B Form

Every active sentence has at least two parts:  
a subject [1] + an active verb form [2]

*We normally produce a preliminary analysis.*

[1]                    [ 2 ]

Every passive sentence has at least two parts:  
a subject [1] + a passive verb form [2]

*A preliminary analysis is normally produced.*

[        1        ] [        2        ]

## C Uses

We use the *active* verb form in speech and writing to describe actions and events. For example: Paper still plays a vital role in our lives – newspapers tell us the events of the day, and books entertain and educate us. Paper has been with us since 105 A.D. The Chinese first used it to make records; later it spread to all parts of the world.

We can use the *passive* in the following situations:

- 1 We are not interested in the doer.

*Ancient paper was made entirely of rags; modern paper is made from wood pulp - a faster and cheaper alternative.*

- 2 In process descriptions.

*First the logs are stripped of bark, cut into smaller sections, and made into chips. The chips are put into a large tank called a digester and allowed to stew in a chemical mix under pressure. The wood pulp that is created by this process is then washed to remove any chemicals and pressed through screens to remove chunks and foreign objects. The pulp is then drained of water to form a mass that is then bleached and washed again.*

The first two corresponding *active* sentences would be:

*First we strip the logs of bark, then we cut them into smaller sections, and make them into chips. We then put the chips into a large tank called a digester and allow them to stew in a chemical mix under pressure.*

- 3 In impersonal language.

*The chemicals in this process are toxic; safety clothing must be worn.*

This is the typical style of a written order or instruction. The corresponding *active* sentence would be:

*The chemicals are toxic; wear safety clothing.*



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*We normally produce a preliminary analysis.*

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*A preliminary analysis is normally produced.*

[                    1                    ] [                    2                    ]

# Passive Voice

**Active:** Subject + Verb + Object

**Passive:** Subject + "to be" + past participle + by + Object

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# Passive Voice

describes a verb whose subject does not perform the action of the verb, but receives it

## Example 1

subject

verb in the passive voice

the "actor"

The bridge

was destroyed

by engineers.



The **subject** did not do the action of the **verb**.  
(The action of the verb was done to the subject.)



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# How frequent is passive voice used?

least number  
of passives  
per number  
of words

*conversation*

*fiction*

*journalism*

*science*

highest number  
of passives  
per number  
of words



1 In the following sentences underline the verbs and decide if they are active or passive.

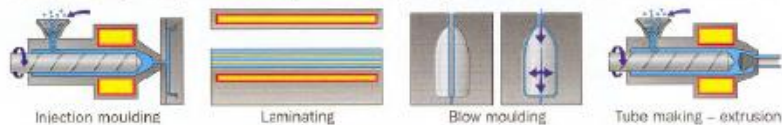
- 1 A repeater boosts the electrical signal so that longer cables can be used.
- 2 Men's ties are usually made of silk or polyester.
- 3 Nearly all paper can be recycled if it is sorted and contaminants are removed.
- 4 Geothermal energy is produced below the earth's surface.
- 5 The main sources of greenhouse gas emissions include fossil fuel generating plants and transportation vehicles.
- 6 Manufacturers choose plastic containers for many different reasons.
- 7 Oil was formed in underground rocks millions of years ago.

2 Here is a list of changes which have taken place in a town between 1960 and today. Use these notes and the verbs given to write sentences to describe these changes.

Example: *Four hotels have been built.*

1960	today	verb
no hotels	four hotels	build
wet land	no wet land	drain
small library	new library extension	open
three factories	no factories	close
river polluted	river clean	clean
few offices	new office block	build
no parks	two parks	establish
no airport	plans for airport	plan

3 In the following description of how plastics are shaped, put the verb in brackets in the correct form.



There are many ways of shaping plastics. The most common way is by moulding. Blow-moulding (a) \_\_\_\_\_ (use) to make bottles. In this process, air (b) \_\_\_\_\_ (blow) into a blob of molten plastic inside a hollow mould and the plastic (c) \_\_\_\_\_ (force) against the sides of the mould.

Toys and bowls (d) \_\_\_\_\_ (make) by injection moulding. Thermoplastic chips (e) \_\_\_\_\_ first \_\_\_\_\_ (heat) until they melt and then forced into a water-cooled mould under pressure. This method (f) \_\_\_\_\_ (suit) to mass production.

Laminating (g) \_\_\_\_\_ (produce) the heat-proof laminate which (h) \_\_\_\_\_ (use), for example, for work surfaces in kitchens. In this process, a kind of sandwich (i) \_\_\_\_\_ (make) of layers of paper or cloth which (j) \_\_\_\_\_ (soak) in resin solution. They (k) \_\_\_\_\_ then \_\_\_\_\_ (squeeze) together in a heated press.

Thermoplastics can (l) \_\_\_\_\_ (shape) by extrusion. Molten plastic (m) \_\_\_\_\_ (force) through a shaped hole or die. Fibres for textiles and sheet plastic may (n) \_\_\_\_\_ (make) by extrusion.



**1**

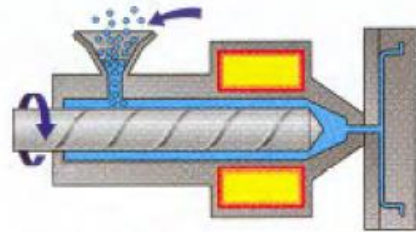
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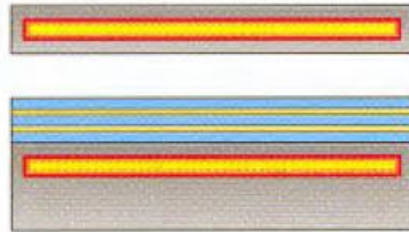


3

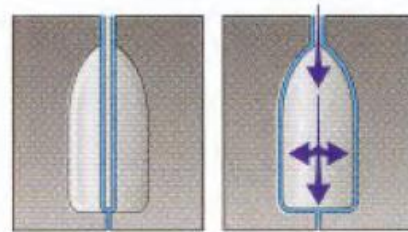
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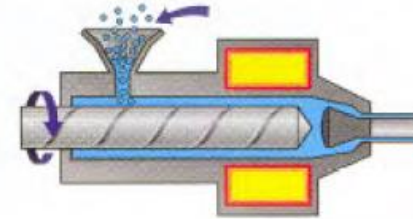
Injection moulding



Laminating



Blow moulding



Tube making – extrusion

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# Read on



## Passive Voice: When to Avoid It and When to Use It

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<https://www.grammarly.com/blog/passive-voice/>