

## Active VS. Passive Verbs

Some sentences are written so that the subject is doing the action of the verb.

- For example: The dog bit John.
- *Ask:* What is the subject of the sentence? What did the subject do?
- When sentences are written this way, we say that it uses the active voice.

But the sentence can be rewritten so that the subject is the recipient of the action.

- For example: John was bitten by the dog.
- *Ask:* What is the subject of the sentence this time? What happened to the subject? This is known as the passive voice.

The action happened to the subject – so the subject was passive. If the action is being performed directly by the subject – it is considered active.

1. When the subject of the sentence performs the action of the verb, the verb is in the active voice:

The children played on the swing sets.  
Our boss gave us a day off.

2. When the subject of the sentence receives the action of the verb, the verb is in the passive voice:

The swing sets were played on by the children.

A day off was given to us by our boss.

I. Identify whether the following sentences are in the active voice or are in the passive voice:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. A law office advertised for a secretary in the classified ads.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The classified ads contained an advertisement for a secretary.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. I applied for the position by sending a resume and cover letter.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Sometimes, potential employers don't respond to every resume they receive.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I was called by a representative of the company and invited for an interview.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Without doubt, they received many applications in addition to mine.

II. Compose two sentences, one on the active voice and one in the passive voice, using the verbs listed:

- 1. Active – to buy Passive – are bought
- 2. Active – to report Passive - was reported

III. Indicate whether the active or passive voice is more appropriate for the following sentences. If the sentence works better in the opposite voice, re-write it.

- 1. The bed was gotten out of by me at 7:30 a.m.
- 2. I listened to the radio program.
- 3. The meal was beautifully presented.
- 4. All applicants are interviewed prior to being hired.
- 5. It was decided by me that Tanya should drive home last night.
- 6. The landscaping was installed by the homeowner.

7. The stage was exited by me only after a long standing ovation.

Answer Key

I. Identify whether the following sentences are in the active voice or are in the passive voice:

*Active* 1. A law office advertised for a secretary in the classified ads.

*Passive* 2. The advertisement for a secretary was contained in the classified ads.

*Active* 3. I applied for the position by sending a resume and cover letter.

*Active* 4. Sometimes, potential employers don't respond to every resume they receive.

*Passive* 5. I was called by a representative of the company and invited for an interview.

*Active* 6. Without doubt, they received many applications in addition to mine.

II. Compose two sentences, one on the active voice and one in the passive voice, using the verbs listed: *Answers will vary.*

1. Active – to buy Passive – are bought

2. Active – to report Passive - was reported

III. Indicate whether the active or passive voice is more appropriate for the following sentences. If the sentence works better in the opposite voice, re-write it.

1. The bed was gotten out of by me at 7:30 a.m.

*I got out of the bed at 7:30 a.m.*

2. I listened to the radio program.

3. The meal was beautifully presented.

4. All applicants are interviewed prior to being hired.

5. It was decided by me that Tanya should be the driver last night.

*I decided that Tanya should be the driver last night.*

6. The landscaping was installed by the homeowner.

*The homeowner installed the landscaping.*

7. The stage was exited by me only after a long standing ovation.

*I exited the stage only after a long standing ovation.*