

# Active and passive

Verbs are generally used in the active voice, as in the sentence 'I dropped the mug.' But they can also be used in the passive voice, as in 'The mug was dropped.' When you use the passive voice, your writing sounds less personal and less direct.

## Active and passive voices

When a sentence is in the **active** voice, the **subject does the action**.

Deepak **kicked** the ball.

subject does the action      active verb

When a sentence is in the **passive** voice, the **subject is acted on**.

The ball **was kicked**.

subject is acted on      passive verb

## Forming passive sentences

To form a passive sentence, you use the verb **be** with the **past participle** of the main verb.

Annie **was** **driven** home.

verb 'be'      past participle of the main verb

Diving **is** **forbidden**.

## Using passive sentences

You use the passive voice when:

- you don't know who did the action

The cakes **have been eaten**.

- you're interested in the action, rather than the person who did it

The road **has been repaired**.

- you don't want to say who did something

Mistakes **were made**.

- you want to give an instruction, without being too bossy or direct



## Test yourself on verbs

Can you recognize a passive sentence, and do you know how to use modal verbs? The answers to these quizzes are on page 131.

### 1 Active or passive?

Which sentences are active and which are passive?

1. Henry was eating an apple.

2. The egg was laid by a pigeon.

3. The tower has collapsed.

4. Tina opened her present.

5. The painting was stolen.



### 2 Adding modal verbs

Can you find a modal verb to fill each of the gaps? Write out your sentences using verbs from the list below.

should    must    would    ought    have

1. That bull is heading for us! We .... run!
2. The bus is usually on time. It .... to be here very soon.
3. If you're feeling tired, you .... go to bed.
4. What .... you like to do today?
5. There's no alternative. We .... to obey the law.