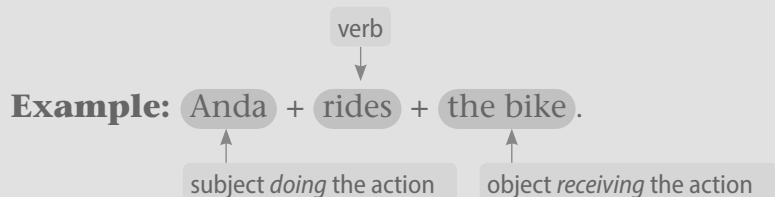


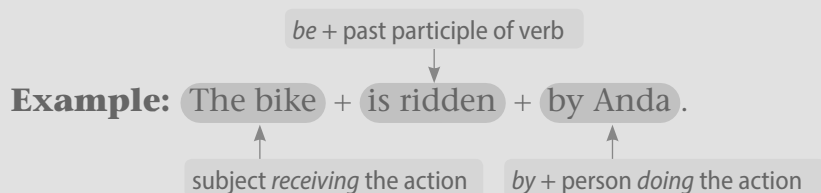
The active voice and the passive voice

Sentences can be written in the **active voice** or the **passive voice**. Generally, you should use the active voice when you write and speak because it is easier to understand.

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



In a sentence in the *passive voice*, the action is done to the subject.



In a sentence in the passive voice, you can leave out the person or thing that does the action.

Example: The bike is ridden. ← The person doing the action is left out.

Note: Remember, all tenses have active and passive voice forms.

Tense	Active	Passive
Present continuous	Anda <i>is riding</i> the bike.	The bike <i>is being ridden</i> by Anda.
Simple past	Anda <i>rode</i> the bike.	The bike <i>was ridden</i> by Anda.
Past continuous	Anda <i>was riding</i> the bike.	The bike <i>was being ridden</i> by Anda.
Past perfect	Anda <i>had ridden</i> the bike.	The bike <i>had been ridden</i> by Anda.
Simple future	Anda <i>will ride</i> the bike.	The bike <i>will be ridden</i> by Anda.

1. Underline the verbs and work out if the sentences are in the active voice or the passive voice. Write *A* for active or *P* for passive after each sentence.
 - a) The librarian issued the book to the student. ____
 - b) Examinations are written at the end of the year. ____
 - c) I was eating a piece of chocolate. ____
 - d) The workers will be paid on Friday. ____
 - e) The hockey team won the tournament. ____
 - f) The email is being read by Ruby. ____
 - g) Andries has completed his homework. ____
 - h) Many houses have been destroyed by the fire. ____

More about the active voice and the passive voice

Sentences in the **active voice** are clear and easy for a reader to understand. If you write in the active voice your sentences will be more direct.

Example: The children will have the best day at the beach.

← active voice with clear, direct language

The best day at the beach will be had by the children.

← longer sentence in the passive voice

There are, however, times when you need to use the **passive voice**:

- If the subject of an action is unimportant.
For example: The road was swept.
- If we do not want to mention the subject.
For example: The chair was damaged.
- If we write an official or scientific piece of text.
For example: The data was collected last year.

← It is not important who swept the road.

← We do not want to mention who damaged the chair.

← scientific text

1. Rewrite the following sentences in the active voice.

Passive voice	Active voice
a) The instructions have been changed by the examiner.	
b) At the meeting isiXhosa was being spoken by the parents.	
c) Uniforms must be worn by the students.	

Scientists say that there are many asteroids in space. Some asteroids could hit Earth. Many collisions have been avoided by our planet. Top meteorologists report that people should not worry. High-tech data is collected every day by satellites. This information is studied by scientists.

2. Rewrite the following sentences in the passive voice.

Active voice	Passive voice
a) They build car engines in that factory.	
b) The chairperson called the meeting to a close.	
c) The researcher used three samples in the experiment.	

3. Read the extract in the margin and draw a straight line under sentences in the passive voice and a wavy line under the sentences in the active voice.