

Passive Voice

In order to truly understand **passive voice**, we need to understand **active voice**. In English, the typical word order is subject-verb-object. For example:

Leonardo missed class.

In the above sentence, Leonardo is the subject. The verb is missed. The object is class.

The above sentence is simple past tense.

If we wish to state the sentence using passive voice, we need to invert the order:

Class was missed by Leonardo.

Note the addition of the verb *to be* (was=simple past) and the preposition *by*. This is required in all passive voice sentences and the form of the verb *to be* depends on the tense of the sentence. The object, you will note, is at the head of the sentence and has become the subject of the sentence.

Active Voice	Passive Voice
Veronica wears that hat every day.	That hat is worn by Veronica every day.
Veronica wore that hat yesterday	That hat was worn by Veronica yesterday.
Veronica is wearing the hat now	The hat is being worn by Veronica now.
Veronica has worn the hat every day this month.	The hat has been worn by Veronica every day this month.
Veronica had been wearing the hat at the time.	The hat had been worn by Veronica at the time. The hat was being worn by Veronica at the time.
Veronica will wear the hat tomorrow.	The hat will be worn by Veronica tomorrow.
Veronica is going to wear the hat tomorrow.	The hat is going to be worn by Veronica tomorrow.

You can use passive voice with a variety of tenses, but remember we usually use it for one of the following reasons:

- To emphasize the object of a sentence
- We do not know who the agent is
- We do not wish to state the agent
- The agent is commonly/widely known

For example, we might write:

The dog was left in the yard.

We use passive voice here because **a.** we may want to focus on the dog only, **b.** we may not know who left the dog in the yard, **c.** we may want to hide the truth, or **d.** it may be obvious or not matter at all who left him in the yard.