



Revising Passive Sentences to Active Voice

When changing a passive construction to the active voice, make sure that you keep the same verb tense.

Original: Every day donuts *are bought* by our human resources representative.

Not: Every day our human resource representative *bought* donuts.

But: Every day our human resource representative *buys* donuts.

Original: That movie *was produced* by Jonathan Doe, I believe.

Not: Jonathan Doe *had produced* that movie, I believe.

But: Jonathan Doe *produced* that movie, I believe.

Original: The decision *has already been made* by the managers.

Not: The managers *had already made* the decision.

But: The managers *have already made* the decision.

Again, when deciding whether to use the active or passive voice, think about the purpose of the sentence and the audience for whom it is intended. Then determine which part of the sentence is more important—the action itself or the person or thing doing the acting—and write accordingly.

When to Use the Passive Voice

There are times when the passive voice is preferred. For example, the passive voice is necessary when the person who acted is unknown.

Examples: The package was sent to me last week. (*We do not know who sent the package.*)

The company was founded in 1992.

Many acts of service were performed without our knowledge.

The passive voice is also a good choice when the doer of the action is unimportant.

Examples: The roads were cleared early this morning.

The mess was cleaned up before we arrived.

In the business world, important decisions are made every day.

The tickets were sold out last month.



Moreover, the passive voice is appropriate when you want the emphasis of the sentence to be on the action, rather than on the person who performed the action. To shift the emphasis to the person acting, we use a prepositional phrase beginning with *by*.

Examples: The message was delivered by John this afternoon.
 The decision was made by the directors to sell the building.
 Property in this town has been bought and sold by various investors over the years.
 Several years ago the company was sold to our competitors by a man from the East.

And finally, the passive voice is useful when you want the doer of the action to remain anonymous.

Examples: Last night the announcement was made that 300 employees would be laid off.
 Three million dollars was donated to the foundation on Tuesday.
 The cookies and other treats were delivered to the children while they were playing outside.

Source:

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