

Active and Passive Voice

When the subject of a verb performs the action, the verb is in the *active voice*. When the subject receives the action, the verb is in the *passive voice*.

ACTIVE Olivia **bought** a bag of oranges. [The subject, *Olivia*, performs the action.]

PASSIVE The bag of oranges **was bought** by Olivia. [The subject, *bag*, receives the action.]

A transitive verb in the active voice often has both an indirect object and a direct object. When such a verb is put in the passive voice, either object can become the subject. The other object may serve as a complement called a *retained object*.

ACTIVE Mr. Jenkins read the class a short story.

PASSIVE A short story was read to the class by Mr. Jenkins.

PASSIVE The class was read a short story.

EXERCISE A On the line before each sentence below, indicate the voice of the verb by writing *A* for *active* or *P* for *passive*. Some passive sentences contain retained objects. Write *RO* above any retained objects.

Example P 1. Which books have been checked out by Leota?

- _____ 1. Maggie admired her classmates' interesting and informative exhibits at the science fair.
- _____ 2. A fierce eagle's face was painted on one of the poles near Ketchikan.
- _____ 3. The volunteer was given a thank-you certificate for all his work and dedication.
- _____ 4. One artist had made a perfectly shaped pot without using a potter's wheel.
- _____ 5. At the end of our hike, we were rewarded by a gorgeous view of the sunset.

EXERCISE B On the line after each sentence below, revise the sentence to make it an active voice sentence. If the performer of an action is not mentioned, leave the sentence as it is and write *Correct*.

Example 1. The pigs were fed by the farmer. The farmer fed the pigs.

6. The letter was signed by the entire class. _____
7. The manuscript was edited by Paulo. _____
8. A large, colorful poster was hung in the window. _____
9. Finally, an understanding was reached by all parties. _____
10. The Purple Heart was presented to the veteran by the President. _____

Using and Revising the Passive Voice

21I. The passive voice should be used sparingly. Use the passive voice in the following situations:

- (1) when you do not know the performer of the action
- (2) when you do not want to reveal the performer of the action
- (3) when you want to emphasize the receiver of the action

EXERCISE On the line after each sentence below, revise the sentence to make it an active voice sentence. Write *Correct* if the sentence is already in the active voice or if the performer of an action is not mentioned and no change seems necessary.

Example 1. We were given an excellent tour of the shoe museum by her. She gave us an
excellent tour of the shoe museum.

1. Items in the Bata Shoe Museum have been collected for over fifty years by Sonja Bata. _____
2. The museum was opened in Toronto in May 1995. _____
3. Ms. Bata's hobby was made easier by her husband Thomas, a shoemaker and seller. _____
4. Shoemaking items, in addition to the shoes themselves, have been collected by her. _____
5. Shoes of all sizes, colors, and materials have been put on display by Mrs. Bata. _____
6. Those hot-pink platforms were worn by Madonna. _____
7. A pair of kamiks, or bearded sealskin boots, were made in the traditional way by an Inuit. _____
8. The woman asked for a new set of false teeth in payment for making the kamiks. _____
9. The museum was designed by Raymond Moriyama, a Canadian architect. _____
10. At the entrance to the central exhibit is a plaster cast of footprints discovered by Mary Leakey in 1978 in Tanzania. _____