PASSIVE VOICE

FUNCTIONS OF THE PASSIVE VOICE

The passive voice is used to show interest in the person or object that experiences an action rather than the person or object that performs the action. In other words, the most important thing or person becomes the subject of the sentence.

EXAMPLES

* The passive voice **is used** frequently. (= we are interested in the passive voice, not in who uses it.)
* The house **was built** in 1654. (= we are interested in the house, not in who built it.)
* The road**is being repaired**. (= we are interested in the road, not in the people who are doing the repairs.)

Sometimes we use the passive voice because we don't know or do not want to express who performed the action.

EXAMPLES

* I noticed that a window **had been left** open.
* Every year thousands of people **are killed** on our roads.
* All the cookies **have been eaten**.
* My car **has been stolen**!

The passive voice is often used in formal texts. Switching to the active voice will make your writing clearer and easier to read.

| **Passive** | **Active** |
| --- | --- |
| A great deal of meaning**is conveyed**by a few well-chosen words. | A few well-chosen words **convey** a great deal of meaning. |
| Our planet **is wrapped** in a mass of gases. | A mass of gases **wrap** around our planet. |
| Waste materials **are disposed** of in a variety of ways. | The city **disposes** of waste materials in a variety of ways. |

If we want to say who or what performs the action while using the passive voice, we use the preposition *by*. When we know who performed the action and are interested in him, it is always better to switch to the active voice instead.

| **Passive** | **Active** |
| --- | --- |
| "A Hard Day's Night" **was written by** the Beatles. | The Beatles **wrote** "A Hard Day's Night". |
| The movie ET **was directed by** Spielberg. | Spielberg **directed** the movie ET. |
| This house**was built by** my father. | My father**built** this house. |

FORMING THE PASSIVE VOICE

The passive voice in English is composed of two elements:  
**the appropriate form of the verb 'to be' + past participle**