



When Do We Choose the Passive?

In English, we can often choose between an active or passive sentence. The passive is generally more formal and is used mostly in writing. Below are some situations where you might prefer to use the passive voice.

1) When the doer of the action is unknown, irrelevant, or obvious:

- **The documents have been misplaced** (we don't know who misplaced them).
- **The streets are cleaned every morning** (it's not important who does the cleaning).
- **English is taught in this school** (it's obvious that teachers do the teaching).

This structure is also used when we want to avoid specifying who is responsible for a negative action:

- **Errors were made** (I might have made the errors, but I don't want to say so!).

In scientific and technical writing, the passive is common because the focus is usually on the process or result, not on who did it:

- **The solution was heated to 100°C** (instead of saying 'The scientist heated the solution').

In formal writing, the passive is often preferred to avoid informal phrases like "someone":

- **The report will be completed by Friday** (more formal than "someone will complete the report by Friday").



2) **When the focus of the sentence needs to be on the action or the result rather than the doer:**

- **The Eiffel Tower was designed by Gustave Eiffel** (the focus is on the Eiffel Tower, not the designer).

3) **To maintain a smooth flow of information by placing new information at the end of the sentence:**

- **Several studies have been conducted on this topic. The results were published last year** (more natural than saying 'Last year, researchers published the results').

4) **When the subject of the sentence is long and it's better to keep the verb early:**

- **I was amazed by how beautifully the choir sang at the concert** (more natural than 'How beautifully the choir sang at the concert amazed me').



Practice time

Fill in the blanks:

1. We can often choose between an _____ or a _____ sentence.
2. The passive voice is often preferred when the doer of the action is not _____.
3. The passive is useful when we want to focus on the _____ of the sentence.
4. The passive is often chosen when the subject is particularly _____.
5. We might choose a passive when we don't want to say who did something _____.
6. Passive voice is used when it's _____ who performed the action.
7. We use the passive to place new information at the _____ of the sentence.
8. In scientific writing, the passive is common because the focus is on the _____, not the doer.
9. The passive can be useful in formal writing to avoid informal expressions like _____.
10. We use the passive when who did the action is _____ or obvious.

Answers:

1. active ... passive
2. important
3. action/result
4. long
5. negative/bad
6. unknown/irrelevant
7. end
8. process/result
9. "someone"
10. irrelevant