AILET

Active-Passive Voice: Introduction, Rules of Conversion, Types of Sentences

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It is important for the CLAT and other Law entrance examination aspirants to have good knowledge of active-passive voice as questions on this topic can be asked directly or in the form of ‘spotting the error’ or in the questions of ‘passage completion’ so one should be clear about its rules.

For solving questions on active-passive voice one should also have knowledge regarding types of sentences, forms of verb and forms of tense because their rules help with the correct conversion of voice.

Meaning of voice

The voice of a verb tells whether the subject of the sentence performs or receives the action. Voices are of two types: active and passive.

Active Voice: In the active voice, the subject performs the action expressed by the verb.

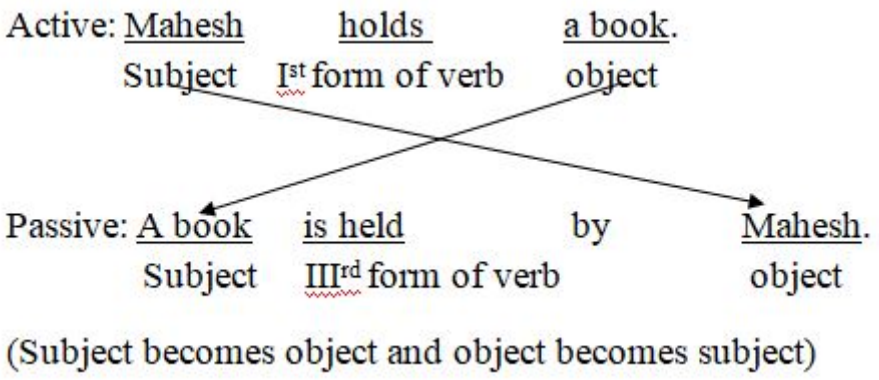
Eg.- Ram sings a song.

Here ‘Ram” is the subject and the verb is ‘sing’ and ‘song’ is the object. Here the action of ‘singing’ is being done by the subject i.e. ‘Ram’.

Passive Voice: In passive voice subject receives the action expressed by the verb.

Eg.- A song is sung by Ram.

Here the ‘song’ is subject ‘sing’ is the verb and ‘Ram’ is the entity who did the action of singing and ‘song’ is the entity on whom action has been done.



General rules of conversion active voice to passive voice:

1. The subject in the active voice becomes the object in the passive voice and the object in the active voice becomes the subject in the passive voice.
2. Put 'by' in front of the subject in the passive voice.
3. Use 3rd form of verb + is/ am/ are/ was/ were/ been/ being according to the tense in passive voice.
4. The following pronouns are used in the passive voice as:

Active Voice	Passive Voice
I	me
He	him
You	you
We	us
She	her
They	them
It	it
Who	whom

1. There is no passive voice of present/ past/ future perfect continuous sentences and future continuous.

2. Generally, passive voice can be made of transitive verb i.e. verbs which have an object attached to them.

Sentences of an intransitive verb cannot be converted into passive voice.

1. They laughed- No passive
2. The laughed at- The teacher was laughed at by them.

In the first sentence, there is no object thus it cannot be converted into passive voice.

But in the second sentence ‘teacher’ is the object thus its passive voice is possible.

General rules of conversion from passive voice to active voice

1. The subject of passive voice becomes object in active voice and the object in passive voice becomes the subject in active voice.
2. Remove the preposition ‘by’.
3. Use 1st form of the verb.

Let us understand the conversion from active to passive voice with the verb ‘sing’ in the following forms of tense.

Tense	**Verb (Active)**	**Verb (Passive)**
Simple present	sing/ sings	am/ is/ are sung
Simple past	sang	was/ were sung
Simple future	sung	shall/ will be sung
Present continuous	is/ am/ are singing	is/ am/ are being sung
Past Continuous	was/ were singing	was/ were being sung
Present Perfect	has/ have sung	has/ have been sung
Past Perfect	had sung	had been sung
Future Perfect	will/ shall have sung	will/shall have been sung

Rules for conversion of interrogative sentences in passive voice:

Interrogative sentence starting with:

(a)**Is/ am/ are**

Passive rule: Is/ am/ are + subject + 3rd form of verb + by + object ?

Eg.- Active: Is he writing a letter.

Passive: Is a letter being written by him.

(b)**Does/ do**

Passive rule: Is/ am/ are + subject + 3rd form of verb + by + object?

Eg.- Active: Does he need a pen.

Passive: Is a pen needed by him.

(c) **Did**

Passive Voice: was/ were + subject + 3rd form of verb + by + object?

Eg.- Active: Did Ram write a letter?

Passive: Was a letter written by him?

(d) **was/were**

Passive Rule: was/ were + subject + being + 3rd form of verb + by + object?

Eg.- Active: Was she cooking food?

Passive: Was food being cooked by her?

(e) **Has/ have/ had**

Passive Rule: Has/ have/ had + subject + been + 3rd form of verb + by + object?

Eg.- Active: Has she written a book?

Passive: Has a book been written by him?

(f) **Modal auxiliary verb** Eg.- may/ can etc.

Passive Rule: Modal Auxiliary + subject + be + 3rd form of verb + by + object?

Eg.- Active: Can she control the situation.

Passive: Can the situation be controlled by her?

(g) '**Wh**' words eg. Why, when, where etc.

Passive Rule: The sentence will start by 'wh' word and then convert according to the above rules.

Eg.- Active: Who broke this beautiful glass?

Passive: By whom was this beautiful glass broken?

- We do not use an object in the passive sentences wherein in active sentences the subject is unknown or is not required to be written i.e. it is understood from the very sentence like someone, somebody, nobody, people etc.

Eg.- Active: Someone has stolen has my watch.

Passive: My watch has been stolen herein object it is no need to write 'someone'.

- Imperative sentences are those sentence which empress order, request advice or suggestion.

(a) Order

Passive Rule: let+ subject+ be+ 3rd form of verb

Eg.- Active: shut the window.

Passive: Let the window be shut.

(b) Request

Passive Rule: You are requested + to + 1st form of verb + object.

Eg.- Active: Please open the door.

Passive: You are requested to open the door.

(c) Suggestion

Passive Rule: subject + should be + 3rd form of the verb

Eg.- Active: Always speak the truth.

Passive: The truth should always be spoken.

(d) Advice

Passive Rule: You are advised + to + object

Eg.-Active: Work hard.

Passive: You are advised to work hard.

- The sentences which express the state of mind or feelings we don't use by in them.
- Sentences starting with 'there'

Passive Rule: there + be + 3rd form of verb + object

Eg.- Active: There is no milk to waste.

Passive: There is no milk to be wasted.

Follow the above-mentioned rules in the conversion of different types of sentences from active to passive voice.

Click here to read about types of sentences.

Read Clatapult's post on active-passive voice.