

## Guide to using passive voice

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Passive voice means using the verb “be” with the past participle of a verb. Here are two examples:

This chair is made of wood. (not “from wood”)

Containers are inspected in customs every day.

For a complete explanation of passive voice, refer to an instructional grammar book.

A) How do you know when to use passive voice? It’s a question of focus and what is practical. Each instance in which you decide whether to use or not use passive voice is different. Here are a few general guidelines.

- 1) We don’t know who does the action.
- 2) We want to draw attention away from the person who does the action.
- 3) The receiver of the action is more important than who or what does the action.
- 4) It is not important who does the action.
- 5) Many people perform a particular action regularly.
- 6) It is not important to name any person who does the action because many people who do it, regularly or not.

B) Read and search for examples of passive voice. Change some of the active voice sentences to passive voice. Talk about whether or not it makes sense or could make sense to use passive voice.

C) Use passive with causatives: have your car repaired, have your hair cut, get the copy machine fixed.

D) Passive sentences occur when writing or speaking about natural disasters such as hurricanes and earthquakes.

destroyed by                      knocked down by                      flooded by                      devastated by                      damaged by

E) People use passive voice to talk about what people are allowed to do or not allowed to do. Use “allowed”, “permitted” and “prohibited”.

F) These verbs are commonly used with passive voice. They are past participles. Context helps you discover or think of examples. Sometimes it makes sense to use “by” with passive voice, and sometimes it does not.

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|--------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. accused of      | 19. interviewed           | 37. recorded               |
| 2. assassinated    | 20. invented              | 38. relieved               |
| 3. bought and sold | 21. invited               | 39. robbed                 |
| 4. built by        | 22. killed murdered       | 40. run over               |
| 5. caught          | 23. made from             | 41. set up                 |
| 6. caused by       | 24. made in               | 42. shipped                |
| 7. cheated         | 25. made of               | 43. smuggled               |
| 8. deported        | 26. manufactured          | 44. soaked                 |
| 9. designed        | 27. motivated             | 45. sold here              |
| 10. directed       | 28. mugged                | 46. stolen                 |
| 11. discovered     | 29. offended              | 47. taken advantage of     |
| 12. driven         | 30. owned and operated by | 48. taken to the airport   |
| 13. exported       | 31. painted by            | 49. thought to be          |
| 14. framed         | 32. parked                | 50. towed                  |
| 15. funded by      | 33. produced              | 51. treated for (injuries) |
| 16. grown          | 34. published             | 52. used for               |
| 17. imported       | 35. questioned            | 53. witnessed by           |
| 18. insulted       | 36. questioned            | 54. written                |