

Can you make the academic sentences passive?

Make the sentences below passive if it is possible (sometimes it is not). Leave out the actor (= subject of the active sentence) if it is likely to be obvious or unimportant.

A

The economy exposes wage earners to risk.

The red line represents median age.

Companies require more patents when they already lead their industries.

Forecasters expect a drop in business confidence.

We analysed the data in two ways.

We didn't achieve the previous results by this method.

We filled the space with silicone gel.

We have divided the data into two categories.

This topic interests many researchers.

Nobody had manufactured it in this way.

B

Researchers think that...

People say that...

Experts believe that...

C

An unexpected event happened.

A negative reaction occurred.

The opposite situation also exists.

Problems can arise when...

This essay consists of three parts.

Our analysis depends on...

D

Inflation increased.

Sales decreased.

What do the sentences in each section above (divided by "-") have in common?

Suggested answers

When the actor (= subject of the active sentence) is not important it is left out below. When it might not be important, it is given in brackets. Ones without passive forms are given only in their original form.

A

- The economy exposes wage earners to risk. – Wage earners are exposed to risk (by the economy).
- The red line represents median age. – Median age is represented by the red line.
- Companies require more patents when they already lead their industries. – More patents are required when companies already lead their industries.
- Forecasters expect a drop in business confidence. – A drop in business confidence is expected (by forecasters).
- We analysed the data in two ways. – The data was analysed in two ways.
- We didn't achieve the previous results by this method. – The previous results weren't achieved by this method.
- We filled the space with silicone gel. – The space was filled with silicone gel.
- We have divided the data into two categories. – The data has been divided into two categories.
- This topic interests many researchers. – Many researchers are interested by/ in this topic.
- Nobody had manufactured it in this way. – It hadn't been manufactured in this way.

B

- Researchers think that... - It is thought (by researchers) that...
- People say that... - It is said that...
- Experts believe that... - It is believed (by experts) that...

C

- An unexpected event happened.



- A negative reaction occurred.
- The opposite situation also exists.
- Problems can arise when...
- This essay consists of three parts.
- Our analysis depends on...

D

- Inflation increased.
- Sales decreased.

Group A are normal verbs that can be made into passive forms in the normal way. Group B need an added meaningless subject such as "It". Group C can never be passive. Group D cannot become passive without changing their meaning, e.g. that something affected inflation rather than it just changing.