

Passive and Active: Do You Know the Difference?



Task 1

Read the story and follow the instructions underneath.

1. Gary was having a bad day. He accidentally threw his favourite magazine in the bin. He then banged his leg on a chair and found his mum had shrunk his best sweater.
 - Mark the subject, verb and object on the sentences by writing s,v, or o above the words.
 - Now read the second version of the story.
2. It was a bad day for Gary. His favourite magazine was accidently thrown in the bin. His leg was banged on a chair and his best sweater had shrunk in the wash.
 - Mark the subject, verb and object in the same way as before.
 - Can you say what is different about this version of events?

Task 2

Think about these questions for a class discussion.

- In version one of the story, which people are to blame for Gary's bad day?
- In version two, which people are to blame for Gary's bad day?
- Look at the way version two is written. How does this affect how we think about Gary's day.

Task 3

Can you make these active sentences into passive sentences?

1. Emma writes up to ten letters a day.

2. The lion enthusiastically gobbles his meat.

3. Mermaids often sing the most melodious and beautiful tunes.

Task 4

Look carefully at the three situations below. Decide whether it would be better to use the passive sentence or the active sentence in each situation and explain why.

1. A mum is telling off her daughter, she is angry and wants the daughter to know. Tick the one you choose.

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Elizabeth, you have smashed my best vase!

Elizabeth, the vase has been smashed!

2. Tony is telling his neighbour that her cat has been killed.

I'm so sorry, a car ran over Tiddles.

I'm so sorry, Tiddles was run over by a car.

3. A child is explaining where the cookies went.

As I left the kitchen, I ate the cookies.

As I left the kitchen, the cookies were eaten.

Passive and Active:

Do You Know the Difference? Answers

Task 1

1. Gary was having a bad day. He accidentally threw his favourite magazine in the bin. He then banged his leg on a chair and found his mum had shrunk his best sweater.
2. It was a bad day for Gary. His favourite magazine was accidently thrown in the bin. His leg was banged on a chair and his best sweater had shrunk in the wash.

Task 2

Class discussion - answers may vary.

Task 3

Can you make these active sentences into passive sentences?

1. Emma writes up to ten letters a day.
Up to ten letters a day are written by Emma.
2. The lion enthusiastically gobbles his meat.
Meat is enthusiastically gobbled by the lion.
3. Mermaids often sing the most melodious and beautiful tunes.
The most melodious and beautiful tunes are sung by mermaids.

Task 4

1. A mum is telling off her daughter, she is angry and wants the daughter to know. Tick the one you choose.

- Elizabeth, you have smashed my best vase!
- Elizabeth, the vase has been smashed!

Sentence 'a' would be better to use because it puts the blame onto Elizabeth. The subject is doing the action.

2. Tony is telling his neighbour that her cat has been killed.
- I'm so sorry, a car ran over Tiddles.
- I'm so sorry, Tiddles was run over by a car.

Sentence 'b' would be best because it doesn't put any blame on anyone.

3. A child is explaining where the cookies went.

As I left the kitchen, I ate the cookies.

As I left the kitchen, the cookies were eaten.

Sentence 'b' would be best for the child to use because they don't admit eating the cookies, it could have been someone else.