

Test 1: the hidden doer test

Read the sentence and ask who is doing it. If the answer leads the sentence it is active. If the answer sits after the word by, or is nowhere at all, it is passive. The doer is not lost by accident: hiding it is usually why the writer chose the passive.

ACTIVE. THE DOER LEADS.

The examiner

the doer

marked

the action

every paper

the object

PASSIVE. THE OBJECT LEADS AND THE DOER MOVES TO THE BACK.

Every paper

the object

was marked

be plus V3

by the examiner

the doer

PASSIVE WITH THE DOER HIDDEN. THIS IS THE ONE YOU MEET MOST.

Every paper

the object

was marked

be plus V3

no doer at all

deleted on purpose

TURNING A SENTENCE AROUND, FOUR STEPS

1. Find the object. Say the verb and ask what. Marked what? Every paper.
2. Move that object to the front. It becomes the new subject.
3. Put be into the same tense the verb was already in, then add V3.
4. Keep the doer after by if it matters, or drop it if it does not.

Only a verb that carries an object can be turned, because step 1 has nothing to move otherwise. Ali kicked the ball becomes the ball was kicked. Ali arrived becomes nothing at all.

THE TRAP IN THE MIDDLE OF EVERY PAPER

A be form plus an -ing word is NOT passive. The passive needs be plus the third form. She was writing the report is active. The report was being written is passive.

WHY A WRITER CHOOSES THE PASSIVE

The doer is unknown. Nobody can name who did it. My bicycle was stolen outside the library.

The doer does not matter. The process is the point, not the person, which is why reports and science writing lean on the passive. The samples were heated for ten minutes.

The doer is being kept out of it. Somebody is avoiding blame, or being tactful. A mistake was made in the timetable.

Knowing these three is worth more in a student's own writing than the transformation drill is, because it turns the passive from a trick into a choice.

The Passive in Every Tense

One sentence, all twelve cells. Only be moves.

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Free worksheets with answers

write the report	Active	Passive
Past Simple	She wrote the report.	The report was written.
Past Continuous	She was writing the report.	The report was being written.
Past Perfect	She had written the report.	The report had been written.
Past Perfect continuous	She had been writing the report.	not used in practice rewrite the sentence instead
Present Simple	She writes the report.	The report is written.
Present Continuous	She is writing the report.	The report is being written.
Present Perfect	She has written the report.	The report has been written.
Present Perfect continuous	She has been writing the report.	not used in practice rewrite the sentence instead
Future Simple	She will write the report.	The report will be written.
Future Continuous	She will be writing the report.	not used in practice rewrite the sentence instead
Future Perfect	She will have written the report.	The report will have been written.
Future Perfect continuous	She will have been writing the report.	not used in practice rewrite the sentence instead

Only be moves. Put be into the tense the verb was already in, then add the third form.

After a modal	Active	Passive
can	She can write the report.	The report can be written.
must	She must write the report.	The report must be written.
should	She should write the report.	The report should be written.

WHY FOUR CELLS ARE LEFT ALONE

The three perfect continuous cells and the future continuous cell can be built, and forms such as will be being written are not ungrammatical, but no examiner wants to read one and no careful writer produces one.

If a sentence seems to need one of those four, the answer is to rewrite the sentence, not to force the passive into it.

Test 2: the one step back rule

Reported speech repeats what somebody said without their exact words and without inverted commas. Because the speaking happened first, every tense drops one row down the Level 3 grid. Past perfect is the bottom, so it stays.

Direct speech	Reported speech
present simple, works	past simple, worked
present continuous, is working	past continuous, was working
present perfect, has worked	past perfect, had worked
past simple, worked	past perfect, had worked
will work	would work
can, may, must	could, might, had to

THE HALF THAT LOSES THE MARKS

The people change: I becomes he or she, my becomes his or her, we becomes they.

The time and place words change: today becomes that day, tomorrow becomes the next day, here becomes there.

Told is given a person directly and said is not. He told me he was late is right. He said me he was late is not.

Direct speech sits inside inverted commas with the full stop inside them. Reported speech takes none at all.

Test 3: the likelihood ladder

Type 0

always true

'if' plus present, then present

If you heat water to 100 degrees, it boils.

Type 1

likely

'if' plus present, then will plus V1

If it rains tomorrow, we will move indoors.

Type 2

unlikely, about now

'if' plus past, then would plus V1

If I had a car, I would drive you home.

Type 3

impossible now

'if' plus past perfect, then would have plus V3

If she had left earlier, she would have caught the train.

TEST 4: THE AFTER TEST, EXTENDED

After any preposition: always the -ing form. She is good at solving problems. He left without saying goodbye.

After enjoy, avoid, finish, mind, suggest and practise: the -ing form.

After want, decide, hope, promise, refuse and agree: the to form.

Look forward to and be used to end in a preposition, so both take -ing.

A phrasal verb is a verb plus a small word whose meaning cannot be worked out from the two parts. Call means telephone, call off means cancel. With a pronoun the two parts split: called it off, never called off it.

This sheet is the printable twin of a free interactive lesson. Everything below can be done on paper alone. The teaching notes on this page are written for the adult; the student pages carry no notes aimed over their head.

If they get stuck, say this

What you see	What to say
They call 'was writing' a passive.	Point at the word after be. If it ends in -ing the sentence is active. The passive needs the third form. Say the pair out loud: 'was writing' is active, 'was written' is passive.
They try to make every sentence passive.	Ask them to say the verb and then ask what. If nothing answers there is no object, so there is no passive to make.
They shift the tense and forget the pronouns.	Cover the verb entirely. Ask who is speaking and who is listening, then read the sentence again from the reporter's side.
They write he said me.	Told takes a person, said does not. Two correct versions, said out loud twice each: he told me, he said to me.
They cannot tell type 2 from type 3.	Ask whether it could still happen. If it could, it is type 2. If the moment has gone, it is type 3 and needs had and would have.
They put will inside the if clause.	Only one half of a conditional carries will, and it is never the if half. Read it back without the first three words.

SPLITTING THIS ACROSS TWO SITTINGS

First sitting, about 30 minutes: pages 1 and 2, then Parts A and B. That covers voice and reported speech, which share the habit of moving parts of a sentence around.

Second sitting, about 30 minutes: page 3, then Parts C, D and E. Part E is proof reading, which is harder than anything before it, so leave it until last.

Mark Part A together and let the student mark the rest against the key.

Score record

Part	A	B	C	D	E	Total
Out of	12	12	11	11	8	54
First try						
Second try						

Part A: active and passive (12 marks)

Ask who is doing it, then see where they went. Only a verb with an object can be turned around.

1. Which sentence is in the passive voice? The chef prepared a fresh salad, a fresh salad was prepared, or the chef is preparing a fresh salad.

2. Which of these verbs can be turned into the passive? arrive, paint, sleep

3. The gate ____ last Sunday. (paint)

4. The letters ____ at nine every morning. (deliver)

5. Turn this into the passive. The builders will have repaired the roof by next Friday.

6. Turn this into the passive. The head teacher will announce the winners tomorrow.

7. Turn this into the passive. The gardener waters the roses every morning.

8. Turn this into the passive. A stray ball broke the window.

9. Turn this into the passive. The committee has approved the plan.

10. Turn this back into the active. The parcels are collected by the driver at six.

11. Why did the writer choose the passive here? A mistake was made in the timetable.

12. The old clock stopped at midnight. Can this be turned into the passive?

Part B: reported speech (12 marks)

One step back for the tense, then swap the people, then fix the time words.

13. She said, 'I am tired.' Which is the correct report?

14. He ____ me that the train was running late.

15. He said, 'I will help you.' Reported: he said he ____ help me.

16. She said, 'I saw him yesterday.' Reported: she said she ____ him the day before.

17. He said, 'I can swim.' Reported: he said he ____ swim.

18. She said, 'We are leaving tomorrow.' Reported: she said they were leaving ____ .

19. Report this. She said, 'I have lost my ticket.'

20. Report this. He said, 'We are painting the hall today.'

21. Report this. The driver said to me, 'You must wait here.'

22. Which is correct, and why? He said me he was tired, or he told me he was tired.

23. Report this. Ayesha said, 'I will bring the file tomorrow.'

24. Put this back into direct speech. He said he had finished his homework.

Part C: conditionals (11 marks)

Decide how likely it is first. The rung you land on hands you the pattern.

25. If you heat ice, it ____ .

26. If it rains tomorrow, we ____ indoors.

27. If I were you, I ____ apologise straight away.

28. Which type is this? If she had left earlier, she would have caught the bus.

29. If the bus ____ late, we will miss the first lesson. (be)

30. If I had known about the change, I would not ____ anything. (say)

31. Which type is this? If you leave the milk out, it goes sour.

32. Which type is this? If we had booked earlier, we would have paid less.

33. If I ____ taller, I would play in the school team.

34. If the shop closes early, we ____ the tickets online.

35. Correct this line. If it will rain, we will stay indoors.

Part D: after the word (11 marks)

Gerunds, infinitives and phrasal verbs. The word in front decides the shape.

36. She is good at ____ problems quickly.

37. They decided ____ the meeting until Monday.

38. Do you mind ____ the window?

39. What does put off mean here? The head teacher put off the assembly.

40. After a preposition the verb takes -ing. Write the right form of leave: before ____ the house.

41. Complete the phrasal verb with one word. The match was called ____ because of the rain.

42. He apologised for ____ late. (arrive)

43. They refused ____ the offer. (accept)

44. I am looking forward to ____ you at the weekend. (meet)

45. What does turn down mean here? She turned down the offer.

46. Rewrite this with a pronoun in place of the match. The umpires called off the match.

Part E: find the fault and write the line again (8 marks)

Every line below breaks one of the four tests in exactly one place.

47. The window was break by a stray ball.

48. The road is repair every spring.

49. The bus was arrived at nine.

50. She said me she was busy.

51. He said he will come the next day.

52. She said, she was waiting outside.

53. If it will rain, the match will be cancelled.

54. She is good at solve problems.

Part A: active and passive

1. A fresh salad was prepared.
2. paint
3. was painted
4. are delivered
5. The roof will have been repaired by next Friday.
6. The winners will be announced tomorrow.
7. The roses are watered every morning.
8. The window was broken by a stray ball.
9. The plan has been approved.
10. The driver collects the parcels at six.
11. The doer is being kept out of it.
12. No. Stopped carries no object here, so there is nothing to move.

Part B: reported speech

13. She said she was tired.
14. told
15. would
16. had seen
17. could
18. the next day, or the following day
19. She said she had lost her ticket.
20. He said they were painting the hall that day.
21. The driver told me I had to wait there.
22. He told me he was tired. Told is given a person, said is not.
23. Ayesha said she would bring the file the next day.
24. He said, 'I have finished my homework.'

Part C: conditionals

25. melts
26. will stay
27. would
28. Type 3
29. is
30. have said
31. Type 0
32. Type 3
33. were
34. will buy
35. If it rains, we will stay indoors.

Part D: after the word

36. solving
37. to postpone
38. closing
39. delayed it
40. leaving
41. off
42. arriving
43. to accept
44. meeting
45. She refused it.
46. The umpires called it off.

Part E: find the fault and write the line again

47. The window was broken by a stray ball.
48. The road is repaired every spring.
49. The bus arrived at nine.
50. She told me she was busy.
51. He said he would come the next day.
52. She said she was waiting outside.
53. If it rains, the match will be cancelled.
54. She is good at solving problems.

WHERE THE MARKS GO

One mark is given for each correct answer, and 54 marks in total.

In Part A, a passive with the doer dropped is correct wherever the question does not name the doer.

Where a by phrase is given in the answer key, a version without it is still worth the mark unless the question asked for the doer to be kept.

In Part B, both learned and learnt, and both the next day and the following day, are accepted, and so are the two spellings of any verb where American and British usage differ.

In Part E, one mark is given for the corrected line. The student does not have to name the rule to earn it.

Where a question leaves the tense to be worked out from a time word, accept any tense the sentence really allows. By plus a future time takes the simple future as readily as the future perfect, so the roof will be repaired by Friday is correct English. Questions 5 and 6 give the tense inside the sentence for exactly that reason.

The mistake	What it really is	The fix
'The window was break'	A plain form sitting where V3 belongs, inside a passive.	Run the after test. After any be form, the third form.
'The bus was arrived'	A passive built on a verb that has no object to move.	Say the verb, ask what. No answer means no passive.
'was writing' called passive	A be form plus -ing read as a passive.	Passive needs be plus V3. The -ing form is always active.
'He said me'	Told and said swapped.	Told takes a person. Said needs to before one.
'He said he will come'	The tense not shifted back.	Will becomes would. Every tense drops one row.
'If it will rain'	Will put inside the if clause.	Only the result half carries will.
'Good at solve'	A plain form after a preposition.	After any preposition, the -ing form, with no exceptions.

ABOUT THIS WORKSHEET

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