

Active & Passive Voice – Lesson

1. Why Active and Passive Voice Matter in Journalism

In journalistic writing, choosing between active and passive voice is an editorial choice. Active voice is direct and attributes responsibility. Passive voice is useful when the actor is unknown, unimportant, or when neutrality is needed.

Examples:

Active: Police arrest three suspects in corruption case.

Passive: New regulations were approved on Monday.

2. Structure of the Passive Voice

Object + be (correct tense) + past participle (P.P) + (by + agent)

Example: The report was reviewed by the committee.

3. Passive Form Across Tenses (Journalistic Examples)

Present simple: The law is enforced.

Past simple: A new variant was detected yesterday.

Present continuous: The building is being renovated.

Past continuous: The website was being updated during the attack.

Present perfect: Funding has been approved.

Past perfect: Devices had been tested.

Future (will): Results will be announced tomorrow.

Modals: Press freedom must be protected.

4. Active vs Passive in Headlines

Active: Government cuts fuel prices.

Passive: Fuel prices cut by government.

5. When Journalists Use Passive Voice

- To protect sources
- To focus on the event
- To avoid accusations
- When the actor is unknown

6. Passive in Investigative Journalism

Example: Financial records were altered, according to sources.

7. Passive in Digital Journalism (SEO Notes)

Active preferred for clarity, but passive useful for official updates.

Example: New guidelines were issued today.

8. Passive Voice in Questions

Yes/No: Was the case closed by the police?

Wh-: Who were the documents leaked by?

9. Passive Voice in Press Releases

Example: The new platform was launched to improve digital services.

10. Summary

Active: clear responsibility, strong attribution.

Passive: neutral tone, event-focused, protects anonymity.