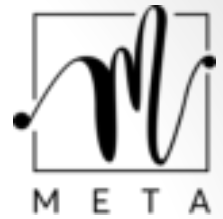


# Formal English for Professionals

**Active form vs Passive form:  
Which to use, when, and why**

- Corinne V.

# George Orwell

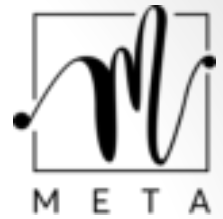


**‘Never use the passive  
where you can use the active.’**



**(‘Politics and the English Language’,1946)**

# Why is there a debate?



## AGAINST

It deadens the language and turns it into a zombie

## FOR

Instances when its use is justified



A balanced approach

# What is the difference?

## ACTIVE

The office manager has called a meeting.

Subject

Active verb

Object

Agent

Present perfect

## PASSIVE

A meeting has been called (by the office manager).

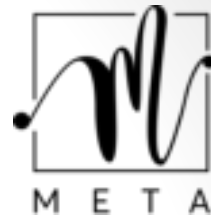
Object

Passive verb

Present perfect

Agent

# What is the difference?



## ACTIVE

The office manager has called a meeting.

Agent

Present perfect

Object

## PASSIVE

A meeting has been called (by the office manager).

Object

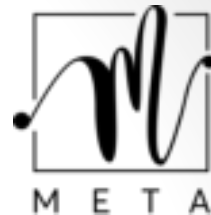
Present perfect

Agent

## 3- Step form

- 1.The Object of the Active sentence moves to Subject position. This is still the recipient of the action, but it takes centre stage.
- 2.The Active verb is changed to Passive form.
- 3.The Active Subject is either eliminated completely or is tagged at the end of the sentence following 'by'.

# Active to Passive verb transformation

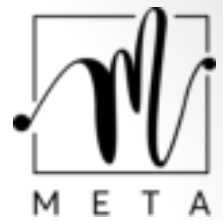


- Active – has called (a meeting)
  - Passive – (a meeting) has been called
1. Identify the tense – Present Perfect
  2. Add the auxiliary verb 'be' and change it to the tense which has been identified – 'has been'
  3. Use the verb which carries the meaning in the past participle form – 'called'



**to be + past participle**  
(changes tense)      (always in 3<sup>rd</sup> form)

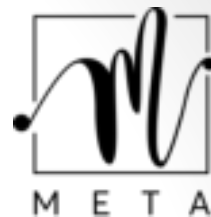
# Active to Passive verb forms (Simple)



	Simple Active	Simple Passive
Present		
Past		
Future		
Present Perfect		
Past Perfect		
Future Perfect		



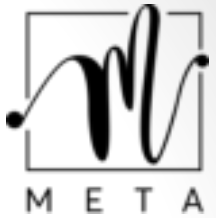
# Active to Passive verb forms (Continuous)



	Continuous Active	Continuous Passive
Present		
Past		
Future		
Present Perfect		
Past Perfect		
Future Perfect		

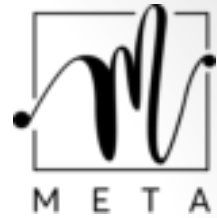


# Change these sentences from active to passive.



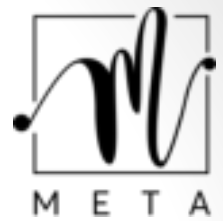
1. The governing authority will amend the tourism legal notice further.
2. Our HR Manager has issued various memos in the last few days following the changes in regulations.
3. Statisticians are currently gathering data in relation to smokers and smoking practices in Europe.

# Change these sentences from passive to active.



1. Drivers are required to pay contraventions within 30 days.
2. The report to the shareholders was falsified by the CEO.
3. The conference room must be locked at the end of each meeting and the key returned to the receptionist.

# Decide which of the below reasons apply for Active use and which for Passive use.



**ACTIVE**

**PASSIVE**

Can lead to  
lack of clarity

Sentences are  
shorter & more  
direct

If the agent is  
implied

If you need to  
shed responsibility

If the focus is  
on the action/  
result

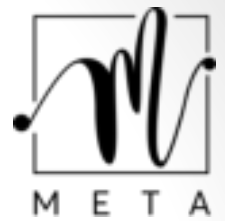
If the agent is  
not important

If the agent is  
not known

In (scientific)  
reports/  
instructions

Meaning is  
more alive

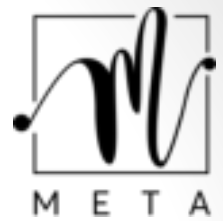
# Answer sheet:



ACTIVE

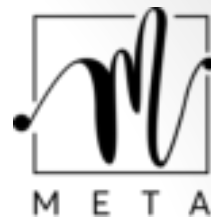
PASSIVE

For each of the sentences below decide which form is used (Active or Passive) and for which reason.



1. Salaries will be cut by 5% from Monday.
2. The protesters were being arrested when the man suffered a cardiac arrest.
3. The Seller declares that the oral statements made to the Purchaser are accurate and true.
4. The Bunsen Burner needs to be turned on until the flame turns blue.
5. The takeover was successful.
6. If Management catches any members of staff smoking on the premises, these will face disciplinary charges.
7. The Louvre was broken into last night.
8. The office is currently being renovated.
9. A name is given to each price category.

**For each of the sentences below decide which form is used (Active or Passive) and for which reason.**

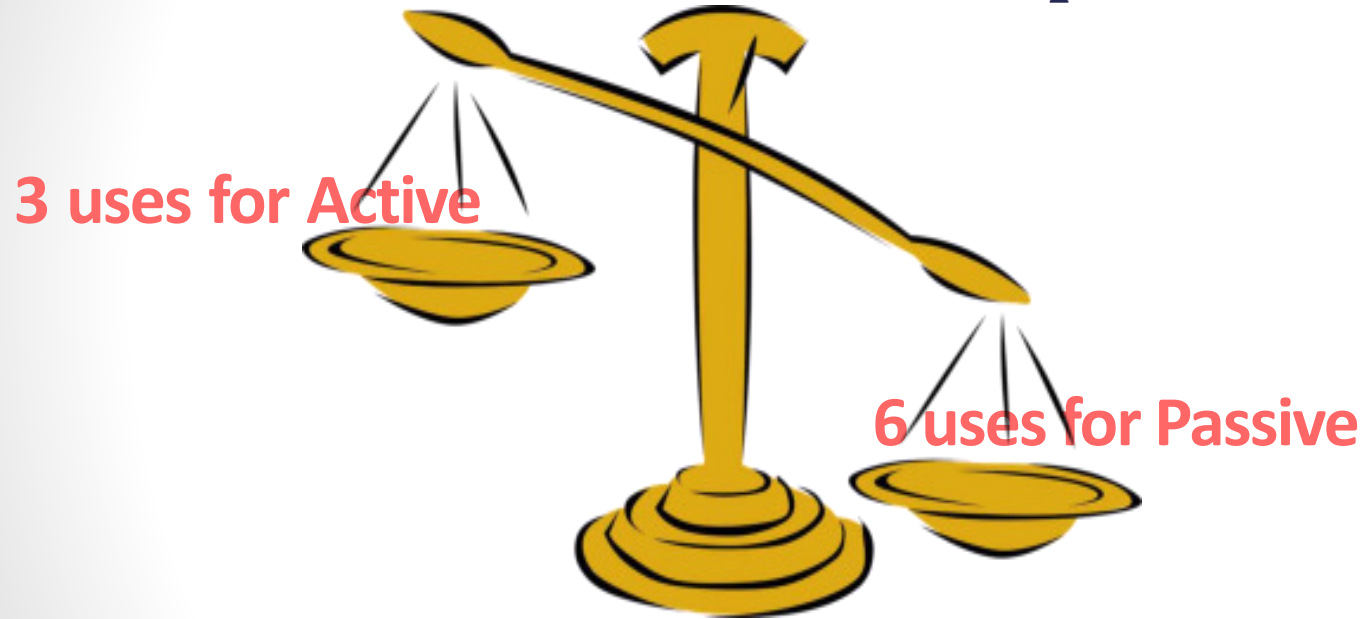


**Write your answers in the boxes:**

1. Salaries will be cut by 5% from Monday.
2. The protesters were being arrested when the man suffered a cardiac arrest.
3. The Seller declares that the oral statements made to the Purchaser are accurate and true.
4. The Bunsen Burner needs to be turned on until the flame turns blue.
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8. The office is currently being renovated.
9. A name is given to each price category.

## A Useful Tip

Is the Passive more important?



Active usage is more **widespread**.  
Passive usage should always be **judicious**.



# Image references

- 1984 Image: <https://unsplash.com/photos/baAshw-yEPk>
- Coffee Image: <https://unsplash.com/photos/TD4DBagg2wE>
- Balance Image: <https://pixabay.com/vectors/balance-scale-justice-law-judge-154516/>
- Thank you Image: <https://pixabay.com/photos/thank-you-feedback-letters-5077738/>