



## THE PASSIVE VOICE

The passive voice is used for descriptive writing, especially descriptions of processes or procedures.

The process or procedure essay either tells how something is done or explains how something happens.

For this kind of writing, it is not necessary to mention the person or thing doing the action, rather the emphasis is placed on the action itself. Thus, passive constructions are important for this style of writing.

In *IELTS Writing Task 1*, you may be asked to describe a process or a procedure. The passive voice is commonly used for these kinds of descriptions.

In passive constructions, the subject **receives** the action and the focus is on **what happens** to the subject. The person or thing responsible for the action is either unknown or unimportant.

For example:

**Air pollution was investigated** in the study.

## ACTIVE AND PASSIVE VOICE

**Active voice:** subject of the sentence does the action and is called the **agent**

**ABC television** screened **the English language series**.  
*subject/agent* *object*

**active form:** subject/agent + verb + (+object)

## STUDY TIPS

When describing a process or procedure in IELTS Writing Task 1, it is important to use passive constructions. This makes your writing impersonal and, thus, more formal.

For general descriptions of a process or procedure, the present passive is commonly used.

When reporting a particular procedure, such as the procedure in conducting a survey, past passive verb forms are commonly used.

Remember to use sequence markers, for example first, then, after that, finally. These make your writing cohesive and your sentences flow smoothly.

**Passive voice:** subject receives the action, shifting the focus from the agent to the object

The English language series was screened by ABC television.

*Subject*

*agent*

**passive form:** subject + **be** + **past participle** (+ *by* + agent)

### ACTIVE VERSUS PASSIVE VERB FORMS

TENSES	ACTIVE FORM	PASSIVE FORM
<b>INFINITIVE</b>	to perform	<b>to be</b> performed
<b>Simple present</b>	perform(s)	<b>is/are</b> performed
<b>Simple present continuous</b>	is/are performing	<b>is/are being</b> performed
<b>Present perfect</b>	has/have performed	<b>has/have been</b> performed
<b>Simple past</b>	performed	<b>was/were</b> performed
<b>Simple past continuous</b>	was/were performing	<b>was/were being</b> performed

Compare the following **irregular past participle verb forms**:

INFINITIVE	Present Participle	SIMPLE PAST	Past Participle
<b>be</b>	being	was/were	been
<b>bend</b>	bending	bent	bent
<b>do</b>	doing	did	done
<b>draw</b>	drawing	drew	drawn
<b>give</b>	giving	gave	given
<b>grow</b>	growing	grew	grown
<b>have</b>	having	had	had
<b>hold</b>	holding	held	held
<b>make</b>	making	made	made
<b>prove</b>	proving	proved	proved/proven
<b>read</b>	reading	read	read
<b>shake</b>	shaking	shook	shaken
<b>teach</b>	teaching	taught	taught
<b>understand</b>	understanding	understood	understood
<b>write</b>	writing	wrote	written

Passive constructions can only be made from **transitive verbs** because these verbs can have objects. Examples of verbs that cannot occur with passive constructions include: *happen, occur, seem, die, live*.