

Passive Voice: Exceptions

Verbs with no Active Form

Some passive verbs cannot be used actively.

“Be + born” is only used passively.

I was born in France.

The twins were born two minutes apart.

NOT: Her mother bore her in Canada.

Some verbs have different meanings when used actively or passively.

“be + locate” = exist

“locate” = find

Union Station is located (exists) on Front Street in Toronto.

After searching on the internet, we located (found) an inexpensive hotel in Ottawa.

Verbs with no Passive Form

Intransitive verbs (verbs not followed by objects) cannot be used in the passive voice. Some examples of intransitive verbs are: *live, happen, go, walk, sleep, cry, come, arrive, stay, vanish, disappear, have, consist of*. These verbs are not used passively. Some verbs are both transitive and intransitive. They can be used actively and passively.

Explain why PASSIVE verbs are used in the sentences below.

1. The enormous stone figures on Easter Island are mysterious. People wonder why the figures were built and how the heavy stone was moved.
2. Sir John A. Macdonald, the first Canadian Prime Minister, was elected in 1867.
3. Macbeth was written by William Shakespeare.
4. Our house was damaged by the strong winds last night.
5. I hope the deep snow on the streets will be cleared before tomorrow morning.

Fill in the blanks with ACTIVE or PASSIVE forms of the verbs provided. Use suitable tenses.

The first inhabitants of Canada _____ (know) as First Nations or Native People. They _____ (settle) here before the first Europeans _____ (arrive). The first permanent European settlement _____ (build) by the French in the early 1600s. Later the British _____ (arrive) and the country _____ (divide) into Upper and Lower Canada. Canada _____ (not become) a country officially until 1867, when Upper and Lower Canada _____ (join). Quebec and Ontario _____ (enter) Confederation at that time. Little by little, other provinces _____ (convince) to join Canada. Newfoundland _____ (be) the last province to join Confederation, in 1949. Just a few years ago, in 1999, the Northwest Territories _____ (divide) to create a new territory called Nunavut. Nunavut _____ (govern) by the Inuit people.

Change the PASSIVE sentences to the ACTIVE if possible (if the verb is transitive).

1. My brother was born when I was four years old.

2. Macbeth was written by Shakespeare.

3. Colombia and Brazil are located in South America.

4. “*Sunflowers*” was painted by Van Gogh.
