

Active / Passive Voice Basic Terms and Definitions

Agent:

The **AGENT** is the element that is performing the action of the verb.
(The agent can be identified regardless of case or grammatical function)

The *wind* blew the leaves off the tree.
Recently *someone* drove their car over the lawn.
The houses were destroyed by *fire*.

Many of the publications had been produced by *amateurs*.
Only a few items were discussed at the meeting. (no agent)

Patient:

The **PATIENT** is any element acted on by an agent (regardless of case or grammatical function).
(The agent is often missing in a passive voice construction.)

Mary sued *John* for all his worth.
John is an engineer. (no patient)
The boys helped their *sister* with her homework.

Some *signs* were removed after the demonstration.
The *mural* was created by all the students in the class.
During the storm, many *cars* were abandoned on the highway.

Subject:

The **SUBJECT** is the grammatical element in a sentence to which the verb conjugates.

The *gardens* were damaged by the storm.
The *worker* is cleaning the walkways.

The *mural* was created by all the students in the class.
The *members* are electing a new secretary.

Direct Object:

The **DIRECT OBJECT** is a patient expressed in the objective (accusative) case.
The direct object is never in the nominative case and never follows a preposition.

The storm damaged the *trees*.
The worker was cleaning the *walkways*.

All the students in the class created a *mural*.
The members elected *him*.

Definition of Active Voice:

The agent and the grammatical subject in a sentence are one in the same.

The *worker* cleaned the walkways.
The *wind* blew the leaves off the tree.
Recently *someone* drove their car over the lawn.

The *administration* is reimbursing the workers.
The *storm* damaged the gardens.

Passive Form of the Verb:

The **PASSIVE FORM OF THE VERB** consists of a form of be or get plus a participle.

The walkways were cleaned by a worker.
No leaves were blown off the tree by the wind.
My lawn was ruined by someone's car.
The problem never got solved.

The workers are being reimbursed by the administration.
Our gardens were damaged by the storm.
This film will be seen by millions.

Definition of Passive Voice:

The grammatical subject of a sentence is **NOT** the agent, **AND** the verb is in its passive form.
(The subject is highlighted in each, the passive verbs are underlined.)

The walkways were cleaned by a worker.
No leaves were blown off the tree by the wind.
My lawn was ruined by someone's car.

The workers are being reimbursed by the administration.
Our gardens were damaged by the storm.