

6 Company and community

The passive

1 Compare sentences a and b then answer the questions below.

- a) Our subcontractors **employed** a lot of illegal immigrants last year.
 b) A lot of illegal immigrants **were employed** by our subcontractors last year.
- Which sentence are you more likely to hear in a spoken conversation?
 - Which sentence are you more likely to read in a written report?
 - Which sentence uses a passive verb?
 - Rewrite sentence b so that the person or thing that did the action (the agent) is not mentioned.

2 Read the sentences a–d then answer the questions below.

- a) A lot of production **has been moved** overseas to countries where labour is cheap.
 b) New laws **have been introduced** to protect health and safety at work.
 c) The company admitted that mistakes **had been made**.
 d) It **was agreed** that compensation would be paid to the employees who lost their jobs.
- Which sentence uses the passive because the agent is obvious (it is clearly 'the government')?
 - Which sentence uses the passive because the agent is unknown?
 - Which sentence uses the passive because we are not interested in the agent (it is a group of people, but exactly who is irrelevant)?
 - Which sentence uses the passive because the writer does not want us to identify the agent?

3 Compare two ways to end this sentence.

Many tourists enjoy taking a cruise along the Danube, but over recent years ...

- ... **the river has been polluted** by raw sewage, agricultural chemicals and industrial waste.
- ... raw sewage, agricultural chemicals and industrial waste **have polluted the river**.

Which ending makes a better link to the topic of the first part of the sentence ('the Danube')?

- The passive is used when the agent (the person who does the action) is obvious, unknown or uninteresting.
- The passive is also used to bring a topic to the front of a phrase so that it links to the same topic just mentioned.
- The passive is more common in writing, and gives a formal, impersonal style.

4 Complete the table. Do not mention the agent.

Active form	Passive form
1 We make car parts here.	Car parts _____.
2 They're polluting the river.	The river _____.
3 We obeyed the law.	The law _____.
4 They've offered me the job.	I _____.
5 They were selling fake goods.	Fake goods _____.
6 We can change this policy.	This policy _____.
7 They might fine us.	We _____.
8 I will decide this later.	This _____.

5 Rewrite the sentences using a passive form. Decide whether or not to mention the agent.

- We have put the environment at the centre of our future planning.
The environment _____.
- Johnson & Johnson introduced the idea of corporate social responsibility.
The idea of corporate social responsibility _____.
- Someone services the elevator every week.
The elevator _____.
- That guy with the crazy look in his eyes serviced the elevator last week.
The elevator _____.
- The company is hiring 100 new employees this month.
A hundred new employees _____.
- A problem delayed my flight.
My flight _____.
- A major security alert involving 80 Chechnian terrorists delayed my flight.
My flight _____.
- We must protect the environment.
The environment _____.

6 Rewrite the phrase in **bold** so that there is a better link to the first part of the sentence.

A terrible gas leak occurred in Bhopal in 1984 – it seems that **an act of sabotage caused the disaster**.