

Active and Passive Voice



The voice and strength of a sentence are determined by the predicate (verb and verb phrase). Verbs can make a sentence strong (**active**) or weak (**passive**), depending on whether they're transitive or intransitive, and how they're used in a sentence. This section looks at the use of active and passive voice. Active voice is generally preferred over passive voice because "active" shows action and empowers writing.

GENERAL RULE:

To make a sentence active, move the object to the subject's position. To make a sentence passive, move the subject to the object's position and use linking verbs.

Part I: Overview of Voice

Active voice relies on the use of transitive verbs—verbs that aren't linking or auxiliary. While **subject complements** are associated with **passive voice**, **object complements** are related to **active voice**.

MODEL	Transitive/DO	Fire destroyed the documents. ACTIVE
	Intransitive/no DO	The documents were destroyed by fire. PASSIVE

Rule Application:

To make a sentence active (transitive), use strong verbs with object complements such as direct objects, which act as recipients of subjects.

Model Explanation:

In the first statement (**transitive**), *fire* is the subject, *destroyed* is the active verb, and *documents* is the **direct object** that indicates the person or thing receiving the action. The transitive verb, *destroyed*, has the subject as the "doer" of the sentence while the receiver of the action is the direct object. In the **intransitive** sentence, the linking verb ("were") has the subject receiving the action instead of performing it; thus it is passive in voice. Notice how more dynamic the sentence sounds in active voice.

Part II: Object Complements

A complement completes the verb or predicate in a sentence. Object complements can be adjectives, nouns, or groups of words. They may come in three forms: 1) direct objects; 2) indirect object; 3) object of a preposition.

Noun

Clauses

Noun clauses are dependent clauses that are used as nouns.

A noun clause is used in the same way as a single noun is used. Listed below are some common words used to introduce noun clauses.

how	whatever	which	whomever
if	when	who	whose
that	where	whoever	why
what	whether	whom	

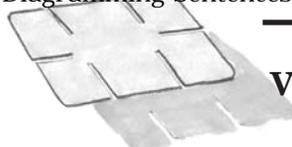
The following examples show some of the ways noun clauses can be used.

Subject:	<i>Which car we take</i> isn't important.
Direct Object:	You can believe <i>whatever you want</i> .
Predicate Nominative:	The best skis are <i>whichever ones feel comfortable</i> .
Object of Preposition:	Mary whines about <i>whatever task is given her</i> .

Exercise A. Underline the noun clauses. Write subject (S), direct object (DO), predicate nominative (PN), or object of the preposition (OP) in the blank at the end of each sentence.

1. I don't know what happened. ____
2. Good grades depend upon how well you study. ____
3. The deciding factor is whether or not your parents approve. ____
4. Susan knew that Tom would be there. ____
5. Whom do you trust is the question. ____
6. No one knows where Donna lived. ____
7. Why he's being difficult is anyone's guess. ____
8. A concern of mine is why you park in handicapped zones. ____
9. Are you careful about what you say to strangers? ____
10. Mother understood that I forgot to call. ____

CHAPTER 5

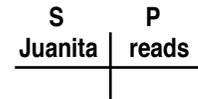


Verbs II

The last chapter discussed transitive or action verbs, and how these verbs took objects and complements. This chapter looks at intransitive and linking verbs. Intransitive verbs do not need objects or complements to complete their meaning. Additionally, this chapter looks at verbals, which are words that appear to be verbs but instead behave as other parts of speech. This chapter is not meant to be an extensive study of verbs.

In this example, there is no DO, and the predicate is a linking verb; however, some action words can also be intransitive:

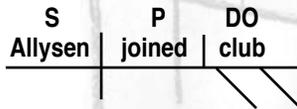
Juanita reads in the afternoon.



Intransitive vs Transitive Verbs

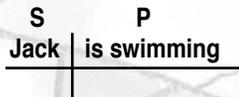
In the examples below, compare how transitive verbs require objects to complete their meaning to intransitive verbs which don't.

transitive:



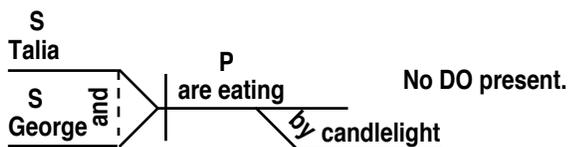
In the above, the word *club* is required to complete what Allysen joined; and since objects answer questions of what, *club*, then, is a direct object (DO). So an object is needed to finish the thought. But this isn't the case with intransitive verbs:

intransitive:



As this sentence stands, it makes sense. No object is needed to complete its meaning, so the predicate, *is swimming*, is complete in itself. And *is* is a linking verb. Intransitive verbs don't need DOs. Consider these examples of intransitive verbs:

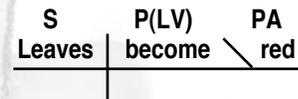
Talia and George are eating by candlelight.



House of Cards: The origin of playing cards is surrounded in mystery. They first appeared in China (Tang Dynasty, AD 618-907) and grew out of a combination of divinatory arrows and papers. They were introduced in Europe in the late 1300s via the Crusaders or the China Trade.

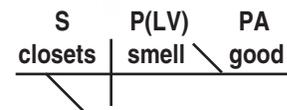
The word *reads* is an action verb, but in this case it's intransitive since it doesn't take an object. But in "Juanita reads a book," the verb has the object *book*, and thus is transitive. Linking verbs, which are intransitive, serve as a link between two words to complete the meaning of a thought. And though they do not take direct objects, they may be completed by a subject complement such as a noun (called a predicate noun or predicate nominative [PN]) or an adjective (called predicate adjective [PA]). Study the following examples to see how linking verbs "link" the subject to their predicate adjectives.

Leaves of maple trees become a beautiful red in the autumn.



The verb *become* links *leaves* to *red*. The word *red* is not a DO because it doesn't receive action, but it is an adjective (PA) or complement. Notice the diagonal line.

Cedar-lined closets smell good.



In the above, the verb *smell* is another linking verb, as are most of the five senses (feel, hear, etc.). So complements are adjectives, or they may be nouns (PNs). And as is the case with PAs, predicate nouns are "linked" to their subjects by the verb. Study these examples:

Maya Angelou is a well-known poet.

