

REVISING THE AWKWARD PASSIVE

Active sentences make the doer or performer of an action the subject of the sentence. They use active forms of the verb: *asks, lifted, has thrown, will call*. **Passive** sentences make the target or result of the action the subject of the sentence. They use passive forms of the verb: *is asked, was lifted, has been thrown, will be called*. In the complete passive, the doer or performer appears after the preposition *by* toward the end of the sentence.

Active: A *tenant* notified the police.

Arsonists start many fires.

Passive: The police were notified by a *tenant*.

Many fires are started by *arsonists*.

In the **short passive**, the doer or performer has been left out.

Active: A *bystander* had notified the police.

The officer arrested a suspect.

Passive: The police had been notified.

A suspect was arrested.

In revising awkward or unnecessary uses of the passive, you may have to supply the doer or performer that has been left out.

Awkward: Preparations are being made for a huge protest rally.

Revised: *Angry citizens* are preparing a huge protest rally.

A. Which of the following sentences are active? Which are passive? Enter the right symbols on the blank. **A** for active; **P** for passive

1. Mandatory jail sentences will be imposed on drunk drivers. _____
2. Many viewers have turned to cable television for better programs. _____
3. The range of television transmission has been extended by satellites. _____
4. Sandra Day O'Connor was appointed to the Supreme Court. _____
5. American tourists profited from favorable exchange rates for the dollar. _____
6. The government eased regulations for commercial radio stations. _____
7. Many banking transactions are now handled by computers. _____
8. The rate of inflation has varied greatly in recent years. _____
9. Many nations are experimenting with alternative sources of energy. _____
10. The negotiations are being conducted with great secrecy. _____

B. Rewrite each of the following awkward passive sentences as an active sentence.

11. Russia was accused by the United States of supporting terrorists.
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12. Action will be taken by local governments to help conserve water.

13. All student vehicles should be parked only in designated areas.

14. A motion was made by a committee member that the group approve the report.

15. As part of their duties, all gates and windows are regularly checked by the two security guards.

16. In the schools of the past, a great amount of homework had to be done.

17. A new treaty covering the fishing ground is being negotiated by the two governments.

18. If an invigorating and inexpensive sport is desired, cross-country skiing is a perfect choice.

19. No explanation was offered by our guide for the long delay.

20. An average of five thousand teenage deaths a year were caused by youthful drunk drivers.
