

Grammar Help Sheet: The Verb

Transitive and Intransitive Verbs

A **transitive** verb expresses action and has an object.

An **intransitive** verb expresses an action but **never** has an object.

The following verbs are always intransitive:

be, go, come, arrive, become, swim, look, is, are, were, was

A verb which is transitive in one sentence may be intransitive in another.

Tom **tore** his coat.

TRANSITIVE

The father **plows** the field.

The cloth **tore** easily.

INTRANSITIVE

The farmer **plows** in the spring.

Voice of Verbs

Voice indicates whether a subject is the **doer** or the **receiver** of the action of the verb.

There are two voices - **active** and **passive**. The passive voice is expressed by means of a verb phrase made by using some form of the verb “be” (is, are, was, were, has been, etc.) with the past participle.

A verb is in the active voice when the subject is the **doer** of the action.

Doer of

action

Will *caught* the fish.

Doer of

action

Dr. Wilson *has cured* my father.

A verb is in the passive voice when the subject is the receiver of the action.

**Receiver of
action**

The fish *was caught* by Will.

**Receiver of
action**

My father *has been cured* by Dr. Wilson.

Any sentence in which the verb is followed by a direct object may be changed from the active to the passive form **without changing the meaning**, as shown in the preceding examples.

When you change a verb from the active to the passive voice, always follow these two rules:

1. The **subject** of the active verb becomes the object of the preposition “by.”
2. The object of the active verb becomes the subject of the passive verb.

	Subject	<i>object of the verb “caught”</i>
Active Voice	Will	caught the <i>fish</i> .

	Subject	<i>object of preposition “by”</i>
Passive Voice	The fish	was caught by <i>Will</i> .

Notice the difference in the active and passive voice forms listed below.

Active Voice Forms

I **sell** butter.
I **sold** butter.
I **will sell** butter.
I **have sold** butter.
I **had sold** butter.
I **shall have sold** butter.

Passive Voice Forms

Butter **is sold** (by me).
Butter **was sold**.
Butter **will be sold**.
Butter **has been sold**.
Butter **had been sold**.
Butter **will have been sold**.

Auxiliary Verbs

A verb used with another verb to help it express the exact meaning intended. An auxiliary verb helps show the tense, person, voice, and mood of the main verb. The most common auxiliaries are the forms of be, have, and do (is working, have been invited, did look). Others frequently used are the “modals”: can, could, may, might, shall, should, will, would, must.