Passive voice.

When and why
We use the passive when...

- The subject of the sentence is obvious.
- The subject of the sentence is very general.
- The subject of the sentence is unimportant.
- The subject of the sentence is unknown.
- We want to stress the action NOT the person.
- We want to produce formal language which is objective not subjective. Therefore common in academic writing!!
The Passive is formed by...

Using the verb “To Be” (in the appropriate tense) + Past Participle.

- My car *is being repaired* today.
- My pen *has been stolen*.
- This email should *have been sent* yesterday.
- We *were given* the day off last Friday!
Typical uses

- 70% of operations were carried out within 2 days.
  - It is obvious that they were carried out by surgeons
- Passports can be renewed online or at the post office.
  - The agent is people generally
- An opinion poll was conducted in Scotland.
  - Agent unimportant (a market research company probably)
- Two students were attacked on their way home from the town centre.
  - We do not know the agent.
- Simple changes can be made by local communities to aid biodiversity, according to Shalmi (2012).
  - Academic language
Written examples

- Present Simple: X is thought to ........
- Past Simple: X was considered as ....
- Present Perfect: X has been produced in order to.....
- Past Perfect: X had been demonstrated....
- Future: X will be analysed...
- Modal forms: (after modal verbs use the pure infinitive of the verb “to be”: be)
  - X should be expected...
  - X would be defined as....
  - Same with can, could, might, may, etc.

Adverbs such as: usually, recently, often, sometimes, can often be used (!) with these expressions
Further examples

- In Sylvia Plath’s poetry, her personal concerns are transformed into something almost mythical.
- A new system of ‘tolerated drug zones’ is currently being established in five inner-city areas.
- New measures to combat the selling of illegal drugs have recently been put in place by the government.
- In the investigation, five deaths in custody were linked to a small group of prison officers who all belonged to the same golf club.
- New trade agreements were being drafted right up until the moment that the talks collapsed.
Further examples

- It took more than a decade after penicillin had been discovered for scientists to find a way of stabilizing and mass-producing it.
- Nothing will be achieved unless the recommendations of the panel are implemented within the next year.
- A massive effort on the part of local councils is going to be required to meet the recycling targets.
- The sponsors are hoping that the construction of the stadium will have been completed by the time inspectors arrive at the beginning of next year.
Intransitive verbs

- There are some common intransitive verbs (i.e. verbs without an object) such as:
  - Arrive
  - Be
  - Come
  which do not have a passive form.

- Go
- Happen
- Look
The manager showed us around the department.

Which is best?
- The department was shown to us by the manager
- We were shown around the department by the manager.