6.4 Passive Voice for Effect: 10-minute Pack

about 10 minutes

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

Three Accounts of the Hartley Road Fire

Written specifically for this worksheet as three original, contrasting texts (a news report, a science method and a press statement) about the same fictional event, for passive-voice analysis practice. Not derived from or based on any published work, past paper or copyrighted text.

Text A: from the Local Gazette (news report)

A fire broke out at the Hartley Road textile factory shortly after 6 a.m. yesterday. Emergency services were called immediately, and the building was evacuated within minutes. No injuries were reported, although two workers were treated for smoke inhalation at the scene. The cause of the fire has not yet been established, and an investigation has been launched by the fire service. Residents living nearby were advised to keep their windows closed while the blaze was brought under control by crews from three stations. The factory's owners are expected to issue a statement later this week.

Text B: from a school science method (lab report)

Investigating the Effect of Temperature on Reaction Rate

50 ml of dilute hydrochloric acid was measured into a conical flask. A three-centimetre piece of magnesium ribbon was added, and the flask was immediately sealed with a bung connected to a gas syringe. The volume of gas produced was recorded every fifteen seconds for two minutes. The experiment was then repeated at four further temperatures, and the results were plotted on a graph.

Text C: statement from the Council Press Office

It has been acknowledged that delays occurred in responding to residents' concerns about the Hartley Road fire. A number of mistakes were made in how the situation was initially handled, and lessons will be learned. A full review has now been commissioned, and any recommendations will be acted upon in due course. The council remains committed to keeping residents informed.

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1 The paragraph below has three grammar errors in its passive constructions. Find and correct all three.

'It were acknowledged that delays had occurred. A review have now been commissioned, and the findings will be shared with residents once it are complete.'

(3)

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2 Official, impersonal writing often combines the passive voice with a noun formed from a verb (called a 'nominalisation'), which can make language sound authoritative while further hiding who is responsible. Match each impersonal phrase below to its plain-English meaning from the word bank, then explain what all four phrases have in common.

Word bank (plain-English meanings, in jumbled order): Reviewers found a mistake. | Someone decided. | Officials are starting to deal with the problem. | Officials are thinking about the problem.

Impersonal phrase	Plain-English meaning
a) A decision was taken.	
b) An error was identified during the review process.	
c) Consideration is being given to the matter.	
d) Steps are being taken to address the issue.	

Explain what these four impersonal phrases have in common, and the effect this has on the reader.

(6)

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3 Three versions of the same event are given below. Label each version as Direct, Vague, or Deliberately evasive.

A) 'Paint was spilled in the corridor.'
B) 'A workman spilled paint in the corridor while repainting the walls.'
C) 'It has been reported that an incident occurred involving paint in the corridor.'

(a) Version A **(1)**

(b) Version B **(1)**

(c) Version C **(1)**

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4 Text C opens with the phrase 'It has been acknowledged that delays occurred...' rather than 'We acknowledge that we caused delays...'. Explain the effect of this impersonal opening.

(2)

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Mark scheme · 6.4 Passive Voice for Effect: 10-minute Pack

Question 1

'It were acknowledged' corrected to 'It was acknowledged' cao	**B1**
'A review have now been commissioned' corrected to 'A review has now been commissioned' cao	**B1**
'once it are complete' corrected to 'once it is complete' cao	**B1**

Answer: **It was acknowledged that delays had occurred. A review has now been commissioned, and the findings will be shared with residents once it is complete.**

Question 2

a) matched to 'Someone decided.' cao	**B1**
b) matched to 'Reviewers found a mistake.' cao	**B1**
c) matched to 'Officials are thinking about the problem.' cao	**B1**
d) matched to 'Officials are starting to deal with the problem.' cao	**B1**
identifies that each phrase turns a person's action into an abstract 'thing' (a decision, an error, consideration, steps) combined with the passive voice, and explains that this hides who is acting and makes vague, unfinished actions sound official and important (oe)	**B2**

Answer: **a) Someone decided. b) Reviewers found a mistake. c) Officials are thinking about the problem. d) Officials are starting to deal with the problem. All four phrases turn a simple action into an abstract noun (a decision, an error, consideration, steps) and pair it with the passive voice. This hides who is acting and can make vague or barely-started actions sound official, formal and further along than they really are.**

Question 3

(a) Vague, oe (accept 'passive, agent unstated')	**B1**
(a) Answer: **Vague**	
(b) Direct cao	**B1**
(b) Answer: **Direct**	
(c) Deliberately evasive, oe	**B1**
(c) Answer: **Deliberately evasive**	

Question 4

identifies that 'It has been acknowledged' removes any personal subject taking ownership of the admission, unlike 'We acknowledge'	**B1**
explains the effect, e.g. it sounds formal and official while making the admission feel as though it arrived from nowhere in particular, softening the sense that the council is personally confessing fault (oe)	**B1**

Answer: **'It has been acknowledged' removes any personal subject taking ownership, unlike the direct alternative 'We acknowledge'. This sounds formal and official, but it also makes the admission feel as though it arrived from nowhere in particular, softening the sense that the council is personally confessing fault.**

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