6.4 Passive Voice for Effect: 30-minute Pack

about 30 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 Compare the effect of the passive voice in Text A (the news report) and Text C (the council statement). In your answer you should consider: which agents are named and which are deleted in each text; why each writer might have made these choices; and the different effects on the reader, for example the sense of neutral convention in journalism compared with possible evasion of blame in the political statement.

(6)

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2 A greenhouse window was broken during a school science lesson. Write two short reports about the incident, then add one sentence explaining the difference in effect between them.

Version 1 (5 marks): a short item for the school newsletter (approximately 50-70 words) that uses the passive voice and deliberately deletes the agent, so that it is not stated who broke the window.

Version 2 (3 marks): an active-voice account for a teacher's incident log (approximately 30-50 words) that makes clear exactly who was responsible.

Explanation (2 marks): explain, in one or two sentences, the difference in effect between your two versions.

(10)

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3 Sort the sentences in the box into the correct column of the table below: active voice, passive voice with the agent named, or passive voice with the agent deleted (left out).

Sentence bank:

1. An investigation has been launched by the fire service.
2. No injuries were reported.
3. The blaze was brought under control by crews from three stations.
4. A number of mistakes were made in how the situation was initially handled.
5. The results were plotted on a graph.
6. The factory's owners will issue a statement later this week.

Active voice	Passive - agent named	Passive - agent deleted

(6)

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4 Each sentence below deletes (leaves out) the agent. Based on the context of the texts above, state who most likely carried out the action, even though they are not named in the sentence.

(a) 'No injuries were reported.' (Text A) **(1)**

(b) 'A number of mistakes were made in how the situation was initially handled.' (Text C) **(1)**

(c) 'The volume of gas produced was recorded every fifteen seconds.' (Text B) **(1)**

(d) 'A full review has now been commissioned.' (Text C) **(1)**

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5 Look at this sentence from Text C: 'A number of mistakes were made in how the situation was initially handled.'

(a) Which reason best explains why the agent has been deleted here? **(1)**

- ☐ A) The agent is genuinely unknown to the council
- ☐ B) The agent is too obvious to need stating
- ☐ C) Naming the agent is deliberately avoided so that responsibility sounds less direct
- ☐ D) The sentence would be grammatically incorrect if an agent were added

(b) Explain your choice, referring to who the council clearly already knows made the mistakes. **(2)**

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6 Text B (the science method) uses the passive voice in almost every sentence, always without naming who carried out the steps. Explain why this is the standard convention in scientific writing, rather than an attempt to hide anything.

(2)

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7 Explain the effect of the phrase 'mistakes were made' in Text C, comparing it to a more direct alternative such as 'We made mistakes.'

(2)

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8 Each sentence below has a grammar error in its passive construction. Correct each one.

(a) 'The review will be completed by March, and the results will be publish shortly after.' **(1)**

(b) 'Mistakes has been made in the handling of the incident.' **(1)**

(c) 'The flask were sealed immediately after the magnesium was added.' **(1)**

(d) 'A statement have been promised for later this week.' **(1)**

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Mark scheme · 6.4 Passive Voice for Effect: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

Level 0 No relevant comparison made; comments do not engage with the passive voice in either text. **0**

Level 1 Simple identification of passive voice examples in one or both texts, with little or no comparison of effect. **1-2**

Level 2 Clear comparison of some named and deleted agents across the two texts, with a reasonable attempt to explain the different effects on the reader. **3-4**

Level 3 Detailed, well-supported comparison of named and deleted agents in both texts, with a convincing explanation of how each writer's choices create different effects (neutral convention versus possible evasion). **5-6**

Indicative content:

- Text A names agents where it is useful for credibility (by the fire service, by crews from three stations) but deletes agents for routine actions (were called, was evacuated, were reported)
- Text C almost always deletes the agent, even where the agent (the council) is obvious, e.g. 'mistakes were made', 'a full review has been commissioned'
- Text A's passive choices reflect standard, largely neutral journalistic convention: focusing on events rather than naming every individual involved
- Text C's repeated agent deletion, especially around the word 'mistakes', can be read as a deliberate attempt to soften blame and distance the council from responsibility
- Both texts show that the same grammatical structure (the passive voice) can serve very different purposes depending on genre and intention
- A convincing answer supports each point with a precise quotation from the relevant text

Question 2

Content, register and control of voice/agent choices

Level 1 Simple account of the incident given in each version; little sense of a deliberate difference in register or agent choice between the two. **1-2**

Level 2 Clear account of the incident in each version, with a reasonable attempt to use a suitably neutral register in Version 1 and a clearer, more direct register in Version 2. **3-4**

Level 3 Convincing, well-controlled account of the incident in each version, with a genuinely neutral, agent-deleted newsletter register in Version 1 and a clear, direct, accountable register in Version 2. **5-6**

Technical accuracy of passive/active constructions and explanation

Level 1 Passive and active constructions are attempted but contain frequent errors; the explanation of effect is thin or missing. **1-2**

Level 2 Passive voice in Version 1 and active voice in Version 2 are mostly accurate; the explanation identifies a reasonable difference in effect. **3**

Level 3 Passive voice in Version 1 (with the agent correctly deleted) and active voice in Version 2 (with the agent clearly named) are both accurate; the explanation clearly links the grammar choices to their effect on the reader. **4**

Indicative content:

- Version 1 uses passive constructions throughout (e.g. 'a window was broken', 'the incident was reported') with no agent named
- Version 1 maintains a calm, neutral, report-like tone suitable for a newsletter read by parents
- Version 2 uses active constructions that clearly name the pupil or class responsible (e.g. 'Year 9 pupil Alex Turner broke the greenhouse window while...')
- Version 2 is direct and factual, suited to an internal record where accountability matters
- The explanation should link agent deletion in Version 1 to protecting privacy/avoiding blame, and agent naming in Version 2 to the need for an accurate, accountable record

Question 3

sentence 6 sorted under Active voice cao	**B1**
sentence 1 sorted under Passive - agent named cao	**B1**
sentence 3 sorted under Passive - agent named cao	**B1**
sentence 2 sorted under Passive - agent deleted cao	**B1**
sentence 4 sorted under Passive - agent deleted cao	**B1**
sentence 5 sorted under Passive - agent deleted cao	**B1**

Answer: **Active voice: 6. Passive - agent named: 1, 3. Passive - agent deleted: 2, 4, 5.**

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Question 4

(a) the emergency services / fire service / journalists reporting the story, oe **B1**

(a) Answer: **e.g. the emergency services (or the journalists writing the report)**

(b) the council (or council staff/officials), oe **B1**

(b) Answer: **the council (council staff or officials)**

(c) the scientist/student carrying out the experiment, oe **B1**

(c) Answer: **the person carrying out the experiment (the scientist or student)**

(d) the council (or council leaders/officials), oe **B1**

(d) Answer: **the council (council leaders or officials)**

Question 5

(a) C cao **B1**

(a) Answer: **C**

(b) identifies that the council itself is responsible, since the statement is about its own handling of the incident, so the agent is not genuinely unknown **B1**

(b) explains that deleting the agent softens or distances the council from blame, making the mistakes sound like they simply happened rather than were caused by anyone (oe) **B1**

(b) Answer: **The council clearly knows who was responsible, since it is describing its own handling of the incident, so the agent is not genuinely unknown. Deleting the agent softens the sense of blame, making the mistakes sound as though they simply occurred rather than being caused by identifiable people.**

Question 6

identifies that the passive voice keeps the focus on the procedure/substances/results rather than on the individual scientist **B1**

links this to the purpose of a method, e.g. it should describe steps that anyone could repeat in the same way, giving an objective, impersonal, replicable account (oe) **B1**

Answer: **The passive voice keeps the focus on the procedure and the substances involved rather than on the individual carrying it out. This creates an objective, impersonal account that emphasises what was done, which matters because a method should be repeatable by anyone in the same way, regardless of who performs it.**

Question 7

identifies that 'mistakes were made' removes any named subject taking responsibility, unlike 'We made mistakes' **B1**

explains the effect, e.g. it allows the council to admit that errors happened without directly admitting fault, softening the impact on its reputation (oe) **B1**

Answer: **'Mistakes were made' removes any named subject taking responsibility, unlike the direct alternative 'We made mistakes.' This allows the council to acknowledge that errors happened without clearly admitting fault, softening the impact on its reputation while still appearing to address the issue.**

Question 8

(a) 'publish' corrected to 'published' cao **B1**

(a) Answer: **...the results will be published shortly after.**

(b) 'has' corrected to 'have' cao **B1**

(b) Answer: **Mistakes have been made in the handling of the incident.**

(c) 'were' corrected to 'was' cao **B1**

(c) Answer: **The flask was sealed immediately after the magnesium was added.**

(d) 'have' corrected to 'has' cao **B1**

(d) Answer: **A statement has been promised for later this week.**

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