



PASSIVES

Academic writing is expected to sound impersonal. You know not to say “I think” or “I believe” in an essay or report, and using the passive voice is one way of sounding objective:

For example

It was shown that...

It has been proven...

Funding was obtained...

STUDIES HAVE BEEN UNDERTAKEN BY MARKETING STUDENTS...

The problem with the passive voice is that it makes it sound as though the agent, or ‘doer’ of the action, is invisible and/or not important.

Make your writing as clear as possible, to avoid ambiguity.

HINT: Turn the sentence around, and make someone, or something, responsible for the action.

For example

The PSYCH112 experiment showed that...

A series of interviews with more than 100 residents have proven...

The leader of the research project obtained funding ...

MARKETING STUDENTS HAVE UNDERTAKEN STUDIES...



Practice

Make the following sentences active, not passive.

1. The report was tabled.
_____ tabled the report.
2. The order was placed.
3. Pay will be deducted for unexplained absences.
4. Vehicles must not be parked near the entrance.
5. Smoking is not permitted in the restaurant.
6. Staff were laid off.



Related resources:

Checklist of Grammar Problems
Some Rules of ‘the’

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