Module 1 Unit 2
Grammar: The Passive

Summary
The passive is always used for a reason. We use the passive when we:

- choose as our topic a participant that is not the actor. To make it the topic, we must put this participant at the front of the sentence in subject position before the verb.

When you are writing, you might do this because you want to:

- introduce, shift or vary the focus onto a participant that is not the actor;
- avoid personal language (I, you or we);
- conform to conventions in particular types of writing or sections of writing.

When you use the passive, check that:

- there are at least two participants in the sentence;
- you have correctly identified the actor;
- you have formed the passive correctly.

Don’t use the passive:

- to impress the reader with your academic style;
- to avoid giving supporting references for statements you make;
- unless you have a good reason to do so.

Don’t over-use the passive, especially if it results in impersonal constructions beginning with it.