

The Passive: Usage

Why is the passive used in the following sentences? Match sentences 1 - 6 with the explanations a - f:

1. All the equipment is checked regularly by maintenance engineers.
2. Our goods are sold all over the world
3. All the machines were stolen from our shop last week.
4. I was told by your company that the line would be installed on 13th.
5. It is thought that using a mobile phone too much can be dangerous.
6. The paper is placed in the bottom tray of the printer.

- a. Nobody knows who did this.
- b. Both the action and the special people who do it are important.
- c. This is what people think generally.
- d. The writer or speaker is describing how to do something.
- e. Less personal/direct than using "you". Especially in formal letters.
- f. It is obvious or unimportant who does the action, so the writer or speaker does not need to mention them.

Extra Practice: Put the verbs in the passage into the active or the passive.

In 1970 a different way of reading information

about goods ⁽¹⁾ _____ (introduce): the bar code. This is a label which ⁽²⁾ _____ (print) with a series of black or coloured stripes and white spaces. There ⁽³⁾ _____ (be) one on the cover of all books! The thickness of the stripes and spaces ⁽⁴⁾ _____ (correspond) to a code which can ⁽⁵⁾ _____ (understand) by a computer. For example, many libraries now ⁽⁶⁾ _____ (use) bar codes. When you ⁽⁷⁾ _____ (borrow) a book, the bar codes on your library ticket and book ⁽⁸⁾ _____ (scan) with a light pen, which ⁽⁹⁾ _____ (shine) an infra red laser beam onto the bar code. Only the white spaces ⁽¹⁰⁾ _____ (reflect) the light. When the light pen ⁽¹¹⁾ _____ (move) over the bar code by the librarian, the reflected rays ⁽¹²⁾ _____ (pick) up by a sensor, which ⁽¹³⁾ _____ (send) a series of messages to the scanner. The information ⁽¹⁴⁾ _____ (go) to a central computer which ⁽¹⁵⁾ _____ (record) when the book ⁽¹⁶⁾ _____ (borrow) and the date it ⁽¹⁷⁾ _____ (be) due back. If the book ⁽¹⁸⁾ _____ (become) overdue, you ⁽¹⁹⁾ _____ (receive) a card, which ⁽²⁰⁾ _____ (print) by the computer, requesting you to return the book.

