

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.
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- 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.

