

Convert each sentence from active to passive or from passive to active, leave as is, or make another change to make each sentence convey a more precise meaning. Justify your decision.

1. A “Mozzie” boomerang was thrown 50 meters by expert boomerang maker Adam Carroll.

Answer: (active voice) Expert boomerang maker Adam Carroll threw a “Mozzie” boomerang 50 meters.

Teaching tip: Make sure that students keep the same tense as the original sentence. In this case, “was thrown” is in the simple past, so the correct form of the verb in the active voice is “threw.”

Justification: The sentence seems to make more sense in the active because the focus is on Adam Carroll, who is mentioned as “an expert boomerang maker.” The type of boomerang seems to be incidental to the main idea.

2. The German Enigma cipher, which prevented the allies from reading Nazi communications during World War II, was broken by British mathematician Alan Turing.

Answer: British mathematician Alan Turing broke the German Enigma cipher; this cypher had prevented the allies from reading Nazi communications during World War II.

Teaching tip: Several variations exist. I like to stress clarity and purpose – the intent of the writer – over mere grammar. If the writer wishes to focus on Alan Turing, then the revision is correct. If the writer wishes to focus on the Enigma Cypher, then the original sentence is correct.

In fact, Turing’s name may be removed entirely.

Revised Answer: The German Enigma cipher, which prevented the allies from reading Nazi communications during World War II, was broken by British intelligence.

3. A specific case of the Bayes’s theorem, which was a significant development in predictive statistics, was formulated by Thomas Bayes, a somewhat obscure Presbyterian minister and mathematician.

Answer: Thomas Bayes, a somewhat obscure Presbyterian minister and mathematician, formulated a specific case of the Bayes’s theorem, which was a significant development in predictive statistics.

Teaching tip: I would encourage students to play with manipulating the structures, with identifying the agent – or the doer of the action.

4. The famous mathematics book Elements, which was one of the most important primary textbooks in the field until the 19th century, was written by Euclid of Alexandria.

Answer: Euclid of Alexandria wrote the famous mathematics book Elements, which was one of the most important primary textbooks in the field until the 19th century.

Teaching tip: Whether one prefers the original or the Answer really depends on the purpose. Is the emphasis on Euclid or is it on the book Elements?

5. Involvement in the “deflategate” football scandal has been denied by New England Patriot quarterback Tom Brady.

Answer: New England quarterback Tom Brady has denied Involvement in the “deflategate” football scandal.

Teaching tip: Brady seems to have been lying. 😊

6. Three home runs were hit by Washington Nationals outfielder Bryce Harper on May 6, 2015.

Answer: Washington Nationals outfielder Bryce Harper hit three home runs on May 6, 2015.

Teaching tip: In this sentence, the emphasis clearly should be on Bryce Harper.

7. The Washington Nationals drafted Bryce Harper in the first round of the 2010 amateur draft when he was only 18 years old.

Answer: Bryce Harper was drafted by the Washington Nationals in the first round of the 2010 amateur draft when he was only 18 years old.

Teaching tip: Again, it’s a matter of emphasis. In this sentence, the emphasis should be on Harper, but one can make a case for the original.

8. The Indonesian Football Association (PSSI) scheduled the Indonesian Super League (ISL) to begin play in late February of 2015.

Answer: Indonesian Super League (ISL) is scheduled to begin play in late February of 2015.

9. The necessary paperwork and payments for eligibility to play in the Indonesian Super League had been submitted by only thirteen teams.

Answer: Only thirteen teams had submitted the necessary paperwork and payments for eligibility to play in the Indonesian Super League.

Teaching tip: The emphasis is on the small number of teams that had submitted payment by a certain date.

10. Leonardo da Vinci painted the Mona Lisa, one of the most famous paintings of the Italian Renaissance that is displayed at the Louvre in Paris.

Answer: the Mona Lisa, one of the most famous paintings of the Italian Renaissance, is displayed at the Louvre in Paris.

Teaching tip: The emphasis seems to be on the painting, not the artist.

11. The Mona Lisa was painted by Leonardo da Vinci, probably the most influential artist of the Italian Renaissance.

Answer: Leonardo da Vinci, probably the most influential artist of the Italian Renaissance, painted the Mona Lisa.

Teaching tip: In this sentence, the emphasis clearly seems to be on the artist, not the work.

12. The commission on automotive excellence named automobile pioneer Henry Ford as the most influential car maker of the 20th century.

Answer: Henry Ford was named as the most influential car maker of the 20th century.

Teaching tip: Again, the emphasis seems to be on Henry Ford, not the commission.

13. Bryce Harper of the Washington Nationals was named the National League player of the week by the Baseball Writers Association.

Answer: Bryce Harper of the Washington Nationals was named the National League player of the week.

Teaching tip: The agency that granted the award seems superfluous to the main point, which is that Harper won the award.

14. The Baseball Writers Association named Bryce Harper of the Washington Nationals the National League player of the week.

Answer: Bryce Harper of the Washington Nationals was named the National League player of the week.

Teaching tip: Again, the emphasis seems to be on Harper.

15. The United States Senate confirmed Loretta Lynch as United States Attorney General on April 23, 2015.

Answer: Loretta Lynch was confirmed as United States Attorney General on April 23, 2015.

Teaching tip: Emphasis is on Loretta Lynch.