VOICE

Consider the sentence:

The dog killed the rat.

'The dog' is the subject of the sentence and 'the rat' is the object. The dog did something, it is the doer of the action. The rat had something done to it; it was the sufferer or receiver of the action.

Very often the subject is the doer of the action. But not always. Sometimes we put the sentence the other way round. And the subject is the sufferer of the action. For example,

The rat was killed by the dog.

'The rat', which is the subject, didn't do anything; it was the receiver of the action.

When the subject of the sentence is the doer of the action, we say the verb is in the *active voice*. When the subject of the sentence is the receiver of the action, we say the verb is in the *passive voice*.

Here are some more examples:

Active Voice	Passive Voice
Margaret sang a song	*A song was sung by Magaret*
The policeman caught the thief	*The thief was caught by the policeman*
The teacher taught the class	*The class was taught by the teacher*
The boys kicked the ball	*The ball was kicked by the boys*
Did you write the letter?	*Was the letter written by you?*

In all those examples, the subject in the passive sentence is in the singular number; so we used the singular verb and the past participle (sung, caught, written, etc.) of the verb.

Here are some examples where the subject of the passive sentence is in the plural number; so we use the plural <u>were</u> and the past participle (eaten, answered, built).

Active Voice	Passive Voice
The boys ate all the mangoes	*All the mangoes were eaten by the boys*
John answered all the questions	*All the questions were answered by John*

Only transitive verbs can be used in the passive voice. This is because, the subject in the passive sentence is formed by the object in the active one. But if the verb isn't a transitive one there won't be any object.