

Three ways of expressing the same idea

In many sentences you will find an agent (the person or thing who does something) and a recipient (the person or thing that something is done to). If we want to make the agent the subject, we use active verb forms.

The storm damaged our roof.

The children have stuck chewing gum all over the carpet.

Somebody has picked my pocket.

The dog bit the boy.

If we want to make the recipient the subject, we use passive verb forms.

Our roof was damaged in the storm.

Chewing gum has been stuck all over the carpet by the children.

My pocket has been picked (by somebody).

The boy was bitten by the dog.

If we want to make something else the subject, we usually use a structure with have + object + past participle.

We had our roof damaged in the storm.

The carpet has had chewing gum stuck all over it by the children.

We can usually decide what the subject should be by choosing the right verb.

Compare:

The retail chain employs over a million people. (Subject - the retail chain; verb - employs)

Over a million people work for the retail chain. (Subject - over a million people; verb - work)