The English passive voice - activity 1 (guided discovery exercise)

watched / built / direct / object / bridge / were / subject / be / passive / important
/ was / by / was / being / watch

The passive voice is used where there is less importance or emphasis on the
(1. ______________) of the sentence and more importance on what happened and who
(or what) it happened to. The passive voice uses the auxiliary verb (2. ______________)

'The criminal (3. ______________) arrested.'

The fact that it was the police who arrested the criminal is not (4. ______________).
What is important is that he/she was arrested. Grammatically, we now say that 'the
criminal' is now the subject of the (5. ______________) sentence.

The passive is very flexible in English; the subject of a passive voice sentence can
often be either the (6. ______________) object or the indirect (7. ______________) of the
active voice sentence:

'She gave him some flowers' (active)
'Some flowers (8. ______________) given to him' (passive)

'She gave him some flowers' (active)
'He (9. ______________) given some flowers' (passive)

The following is a way to change an active voice sentence into a passive sentence in
three easy steps:

Active voice: 'They are building a bridge'.

1) The complement of the active sentence is placed before the subject.

'A (10. ______________)

2) The auxiliary 'to be' is placed in the same form of the verb as in the active form.
( the verb here is in present continuous so this must be the same in the passive):

'A bridge is (11. ______________)

3) The verb in the active form is then put in as a past participle:

'A bridge is being (12. ______________)

Optionally, the active voice subject may be placed at the end (this is called the
'agent'). The preposition 'by' is used:

'A bridge is being built (13. ______________) them'.

With modal auxiliaries verbs the same steps are respected; the modal verb form is
copied into the passive.

Active: 'The police could (14. ______________) the thieves through telescopes.'

Passive: 'The thieves could be (15. ______________) through telescopes.'