

Active Vs. Passive Voice in Writing

Purpose: Using the active voice for the majority of an essay makes every sentence's meaning clear to the reader and keeps sentences from becoming too wordy. This handout will teach writers how to avoid using a passive voice.

Rule 1: The sentence is passive if the action is preformed upon the sentence subject as opposed to the subject doing the action,

Passive: The entrance exam was failed by over one-third of the applicants to the school.

Active: Over one-third of the applicants to the school failed the entrance exam.

Rule 2: Don't omit agents from the sentence that create clarity

Passive: Your bicycle has been damaged. (Who damaged the bicycle?)

Active: I have damaged your bicycle.

***Using an active voice in writing can also reduce wordiness and create more clarity.**

Passive: Action on the bill is being considered by the committee.

Active: The committee is considering action on the bill.

Passive: By then, the soundtrack will have been completely remixed by the sound engineers.

Active: By then, the sound engineers will have completely remixed the soundtrack.

Material borrowed from <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/539/02/>