

Active and Passive Voice

APSU Writing Center Handout

Active Voice

Active sentences clearly show **who is doing the action**.

They are usually more direct, concise, and easier to read.

Sentence Order: Subject + Action + Object = Active Voice

How to Identify Active Voice

The subject **performs** the action expressed by the verb.

- **Example:** The cat chased the mouse.
 - The cat (subject) chased (verb) the mouse (object).
- **Example:** She baked a delicious cake.
 - She (subject) baked (verb) a delicious cake (object).

Practice Identifying Sentence Parts

What is the subject, verb/action, and object?

- **Example:** The study examined the effects of climate change on biodiversity.
- **Example:** The team analyzed the results and drew conclusions based on the findings.
- **Example:** They built the bridge.

Writing Tips

Use active voice to emphasize the subject acting. This makes writing more direct and engaging.

Works well for clear, straightforward statements, especially in scientific or technical writing.

Passive Voice

Passive sentences focus on the **action** or the **object receiving the action**, instead of who performs it.

Sentence Order: Object + Verb + (by Subject) = Passive Voice

How to Identify Passive Voice

The subject **receives** action rather than performing it.

Example: The mouse was chased by the cat.

The mouse (subject) was chased (passive verb) by the cat.

Passive verbs use a form of “**to be**” (was, is, has been, will be) and a **past participle**.

Example: The document is being reviewed by the committee.

Example: The cake was baked by Mary.

Tips for finding Passive Voice

Look for “**by**” phrases.

- **Example:** The report was written **by** the team.

Look for verbs like **has/have been, will be, is/was** followed by a past participle.

- **Example:** The manuscript **will be** reviewed **by** the editorial board.

Practice Identifying Sentence Parts

What is the object, passive verb, and subject receiving?

- **Example:** The effects of climate change on biodiversity were examined in the study.
- **Example:** The findings were presented at the conference by the professor.

Writing Tips

Use passive voice to emphasize the action or the object receiving it.

Useful when the subject is unknown, less critical, or the focus is on action.

Determine whether each sentence is Active or Passive below.

- I bought bananas at the store today.
- As curators grow a collection, specific works may be chosen to be kept.
- It is believed that this new method is safer.
- The findings were presented at the conference by the professor.
- The experiment was performed, and the results were recorded.
- The researcher conducted interviews with participants to gather data.

References

Montana State University Writing Center. (n.d.). *Active and passive voice*.

https://www.montana.edu/writingcenter/writing_resources/active-and-passive-voice.html.

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