

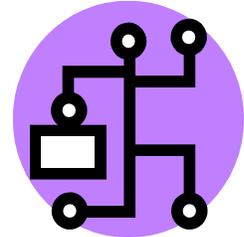
Quick Tip of the Week

Did you know . . .

Verbs can be expressed in the **active** or **passive voice** in a sentence?

In a sentence written in the active voice, the subject performs the verb (or the action). In other words, **the subject acts**.

In sentences written in a passive voice, the subject receives the action that is expressed by the verb. In other words, **the subject is acted upon**.



Active: The Senate finally passed the bill.
The dog bit the boy
Lydia will present her research at the conference.
Matthew took a wonderful picture.

Passive: The bill was finally passed by the Senate.
The boy was bitten by the dog.
Research will be presented by Lydia at the conference.
The wonderful picture was taken by Matthew.

Most instructors will recommend that you write in the active voice as much as you can because it can help make your writing a bit more interesting and clear. Why? Well, because writing in the passive voice a lot can start to sound flat and boring. After a while it can also easily confuse a reader because these sentences can get awkward. The following sentences are examples of how a sentence in passive voice can be much more confusing than its active voice equal.

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

Active: She slammed on the brakes as the car sped downhill.
Passive: The brakes were slammed on by her as the car sped downhill.

Active: I have damaged your bicycle.
Passive: Your bicycle was damaged by me.

Notice how sentences in an active voice also have less words in them than those written in a passive voice. Being more concise will not only allow you to be less wordy, but it will help you “tighten up” your writing.

For more detailed information about active and passive voice see your instructor or a tutor or advocate in the Advocacy Center.

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>
A Writer’s Resource: A Handbook for Writing and Research