

## Active versus Passive Voice

Active and passive voice both have their uses, but most college professors prefer that students utilize active voice wherever possible. Therefore, it's important to understand how to construct both active and passive voice and how they affect the meaning and readability of your paper.

### Active Voice

- The sentence's subject performs the action.
- The agent (thing/person doing the action) is emphasized.
- The sentence tends to be more straightforward and concise.
- The verb is in the standard appropriate tense

### Passive Voice

- The sentence's subject is acted upon by someone/something else.
- The agent is undermined; the result is emphasized.
- The sentence tends to be more indirect and wordier.
- The verb is constructed with the verb "to be" plus the past participle.

Using active voice typically results in clearer prose that is easier to understand; however, in some cases where we don't know the agent, don't want to mention the agent, or want to highlight the results over the agent (such as in scientific writing), it's better to use passive voice.

### Changing Passive to Active

Passive: By next week the course will have been completed by the students.

Active: By next week the students will have completed the course.

Active voice is clearer and avoids confusion.

Passive: The article was read by over one thousand people.

Active: Over one thousand people read the article.

Active voice is more concise and in this case emphasizes how many people read the article.

Active: I have broken the window.

Passive: The window has been broken (by ???).

Sometimes passive voice is useful if we don't know or don't want to mention the agent.