
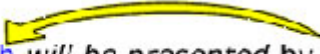


## Active vs. Passive Voice

In a sentence using **passive voice**, the subject is acted upon; he or she receives the action expressed by the verb. The agent performing the action may appear in a "by the..." phrase or may be omitted.

  
The boy *was bitten* by the dog.

The dog is acting upon the sentence subject (the boy); it uses the passive voice.

  
Research *will be presented* by Pooja at the conference.

This example sentence includes the passive voice because the subject (research) is being acted upon (presented) by another person (Pooja).

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

This is an example of the passive voice.

### Reasons to Generally Avoid Passive Voice

Sometimes the use of passive voice can create awkward sentences. Also, overuse of passive voice throughout an essay can cause your prose to seem flat and uninteresting. In scientific writing, however, passive voice is more readily accepted since using it allows one to write without using personal pronouns or the names of particular researchers as the subjects of sentences. The writing appears to convey information that is not limited or biased by individual perspectives or personal interests.

### Recognizing Passive Voice

You can recognize passive-voice expressions because the verb phrase will always include a form of be, such as **am, is, was, were, are, or been**. The presence of a be-verb, however, does not necessarily mean that the sentence is in passive voice. Another way to recognize passive-voice sentences is that they may include a "by the..." phrase after the verb; the agent performing the action, if named, is the object of the preposition.

### Reasons to Use Active Voice

The active voice is more forceful. It emphasizes the "actor" and not the recipient of the action.

### Reasons to Use Passive Voice

If you don't know who the "actor" is or want to emphasize the recipient of the action. ("My bike was stolen." – You probably don't know who stole it.)