

ACTIVE AND PASSIVE VOICE

Thinking that the passive voice seems more sophisticated, students often overuse it. The passive voice should be used only when the actor of some action is unknown or less important than the receiver of the action. The passive voice is derived from the active voice and must have a transitive verb.

EX: John threw the ball. (Active Voice)

In this sentence John is the actor, threw is the action (transitive verb), and ball is the receiver of the action (direct object). To make the passive voice, move the direct object to the subject position, use a form of the verb to be, and include the actor (or allow him/her to be understood) in a prepositional phrase beginning with by.

EX: The ball was thrown (by John). (Passive Voice)

To transform the passive voice to the active voice, just reverse the process. Using the example sentences as illustrations, a person can clearly see why teachers and editors encourage writers to use the active voice on most occasions.

EXERCISE

In the following exercise, change the passive voice to the active voice.

1. The house was painted and newly carpeted.

2. Just when I got comfortable, I was asked to move over.

3. The check was returned because I didn't have enough money in the bank to cover it.

4. The foundation was given \$300,000 by Joe Cannon.

5. Last night a loud party was given by our neighbors.

6. The cake was eaten before we got home.

7. A great love story taking place during World War I was written by Hemingway.
