



W. L. Adams Center for Writing

-Active Voice vs. Passive Voice

Active voice highlights the **subject** performing the **action**. Active voice is generally preferred for its clarity and conciseness.

Example: Taylor Swift performed at the concert.

Passive voice receives the **action**, rather than performing it. In passive voice, the person or item that is acted upon is the **subject** of the sentence. Passive voice can make the sentence wordy and complicated.

Example: The concert was performed by Taylor Swift.

Passive sentences often do not identify who performs the action, creating vagueness:

Example: At the stadium, the concert was performed.
(Where is the subject?)

How do I do Identify Passive Voice Easily? You can identify passive voice often by the presence of “to be” verbs. Examples include: *was, were, am, is, are, being, be, and been*.

Sentence Structure

Active voice: **subject**→**verb**→**object**

| Examples: Passive voice | Active voice |
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| <i>The Hunger Games</i> was written by Suzanne Collins. | Suzanne Collins wrote <i>The Hunger Games</i> . |
| All the goldfish snacks were eaten by SuperFrog. | SuperFrog ate all the goldfish snacks. |
| Joel Miller was bitten by the zombies. | The zombies bit Joel Miller. |
| War brides are studied by Riley. | Riley studies war brides. |

For more on active and passive voice, see the *Federal Plain Language Guidelines* at <https://www.plainlanguage.gov/guidelines/conversational/use-active-voice/>
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