

## Active Voice Adds Impact to Your Writing

Using an **active voice** adds impact to your writing. This is why most writers use the active voice.

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### Active vs. Passive

Sentences written in an active voice flow better and are easier to understand. It is usually the subject of the sentence which is performing the action. Examples are: "I really love this dog." and "Monkeys live in the jungle."

Sentences using a passive voice are often hard to understand. **Passive voice** can make a sentence awkward and vague. The emphasis changes to the receiver of the action. Examples are:

- The pie was eaten by Tony.
- Tom is loved by Alice.

Passive sentences usually have more words than active ones, which is one reason the reader has to work harder to get at the meaning. If you have a composition that is too wordy, you may be able to **change** some of the passive sentences to active ones. Two examples are:

The ballots were counted by the volunteers - The volunteers counted the ballots.

The flowers were trampled by the dog - The dog trampled the flowers.

### Active Voice Adds Impact

An active voice adds impact to your writing; however, you may want to use passive voice to lessen the impact of your sentence.



- Sometimes it is used to deliberately obscure who is responsible for an action, like if a politician said, “Mistakes were made” or “Shots were fired.”
- Businesses may use the passive voice to lessen their impact like “Your service will be shut off” which is passive, rather than “We are going to shut off your service.” which is active.
- In crime reports, a policeman would write, “the bank was robbed” because he does not know who robbed the bank.
- In a mystery novel, you may want to place the emphasis on what was taken, like “the jewels were taken” rather than focusing on the unknown person who took them.

Sometimes the passive voice is used to take the author’s opinions and thoughts out of the conclusion, like “The data suggests that this disease is hereditary.”

## Active Voice Quiz



Some people think that if a sentence has a form of the **verb** “to be” (examples: is, am, are, was, and were), then it is passive. While a lot of passive sentences have that kind of verb, not all sentences with that verb are passive.

Here is a quick quiz to test your knowledge of active and passive voice in sentences. The answers are after the quiz. Are these sentences active or passive?

1. She was walking to the park.
2. The dog is being groomed.
3. I actually love chocolate!
4. Was that Harry being kissed by Mona?
5. Are you going to the movie?
6. Information was leaked yesterday.
7. When are we going to get there?
8. The cookies were baked Monday.
9. He can not decide what to do.
10. The papers were signed by all.

**Answers:** The odd numbered questions are all active, and the even numbered ones are passive.