



## ACTIVE AND PASSIVE VOICE

Active voice lets the reader know who is responsible for the action. In formal academic writing, students should write in active voice as much as possible.

To determine whether a sentence is active, ask yourself if the subject of the sentence is doing the action.

Example:

The City Council passed a law against vandalism.

Is the subject (City Council) doing the action? Yes, it is passing a law. Therefore, the sentence is active.

In passive voice, the acting subject is not named or is named at the end of the sentence with a prepositional phrase. Passive voice includes a **be** verb.

### Be Verbs

be, am, is, are, was, were, been, being

Writers can use passive voice deliberately when they want to hide who did the action or they do not know who did the action. Passive voice is also used in scientific writing when it is often unimportant who did the action.

Example:

The research trials were conducted for two years.

Verb tense—past, present, future—does **not** determine whether a sentence is in active or passive voice.

### Active Voice

She reads the paper.

She read the paper.

She will read the paper.

### Passive Voice

The paper is read by her.

The paper was read by her.

The paper will be read by her.

## To Change from Passive to Active

Ask yourself “who or what did the action?” and add this information at the beginning of the sentence.

**Passive voice:** The cake was baked for forty minutes.

**Active voice:** Scott baked the cake for forty minutes.