

Active Voice vs. Passive Voice

When writing in APA, it is important to change any sentence that is in passive voice to active voice.

Avoiding Passive

- Avoid using all forms of the verb “to be” including: be, is, am, are, was, were, being, and been.

Example: JFK was killed by Lee Harvey Oswald. (Passive)

Instead Use: Lee Harvey Oswald killed JFK. (Active)

- When using passive voice, the subject is acted upon. The subject then receives the action expressed by the verb. The agent performing the action may appear in a “by the...” phrase or may also be omitted.

Example: The girl was playing with the boy.

- In this example, the boy is acting upon the sentence subject (the girl), meaning it uses the passive voices.

Active Voice

- The subject of the sentence performs the action expressed by the verb.

Example: The girl hit the boy.

- This example shows the subject performing the action is **the girl** and the individual being acting upon is **the boy**.

Changing a Passive Sentence to Active

- To change a sentence that is passive, find the agent in a “by the...” phrase. It is also important to think about who or what is performing the action conveyed by the verb.

Example:

Passive Voice: The meeting is being attended by most of the first-year class.

Active Voice: Most of the first-year class is attending the meeting.

- Making the agent (the meeting) the subject makes the sentence active.

Practice with Active and Passive Voice

The following sentences are written in passive voice. Rewrite each sentence in the active voice.

1. The truck was driven by her father
2. The blue team was beaten by the red team.
3. The icicles were broken by the wind.
4. The house was made by Eric.

Reference

Purdue Online Writing Lab (n.d.). *Active and passive voice*.

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/academic_writing/active_and_passive_voice/index.html