



Passive Voice

In sentences using the active voice, the subject of the sentence does the action. In sentences using the passive voice, the object of the sentence does the action.

Consider the following examples.

PASSIVE: The fly ball was caught by Hernando.

ACTIVE: Hernando caught the fly ball.

PASSIVE: The coolant pumps were destroyed by a surge of power.

ACTIVE: A surge of power destroyed the coolant pumps.

When the object of the sentence does the action instead of the subject, the subject is weakened. Active sentences are more emphatic and vigorous, although there are instances in which the passive voice may be preferred.

Correcting Passive Voice

Turning the passive voice into active is simple once you recognize the construction. Here's how to change passive voice into active voice:

1. **Find the verb in the sentence.**
Example: The cookies were stolen by the toddler.
2. **Determine who or what is performing the action.**
Example: The cookies were stolen by the toddler.
3. **Rewrite the sentence so the actor performs the action.**
Example: The toddler stole the cookies.

When is passive voice useful?

1. **When the recipient of the action is more important than the performer.**
Example: A priceless Rembrandt painting was stolen from the Metropolitan Museum of Art yesterday by three men posing as janitors.
2. **When the actor is far less important than the recipient of the action.**
Example: State senator Joe Murphy was arrested last night on a charge of drunken driving.
3. **When the "who" or "what" is difficult to identify.**
Example: The cargo was damaged during the transatlantic voyage.