

## A Teacher's Guide to Passive Voice

### The grammar outlaw: The Passive Voice, AKA The Wimpy Sentence

#### Definition of Passive Voice

Passive voice is not necessarily incorrect; however, it weakens the writer's voice. Passive voice creates an unclear image of who is doing the action in the sentence. Active voice is preferred in writing because it creates a clear image of who or what is doing the action.

#### Identifying and Fixing Passive Voice

First identify the subject, then locate the action. Ask yourself the following question, "Are the subject and acting agent the same?" If they are not the same, the sentence is written in passive voice. Transforming the sentence into active voice requires the writer to rearrange the sentence so that the subject and acting agent agree. The following example illustrates this procedure.

*Example:*

The horse was seen by Carolyn.

1. **The subject:** the horse
2. **The action:** seeing
3. **The acting agent (who is supposed to be doing the action?):** Carolyn
4. The subject and the acting agent are not the same. The sentence is passive because it is not clear who is doing the action.

*How to fix it:*

Carolyn saw the horse.

1. **The subject:** Carolyn
2. **The action:** seeing
3. **The acting agent:** Carolyn
4. The subject and acting agent are the same. The sentence is active.

#### More Clues to Identifying Passive Voice

- Sentences in the passive voice include any form of the verb "to be" and the past participle of the verb.
- If the "acting agent" is mentioned in the sentence, "by" precedes it.

## **You Fix It!**

1. Laurie was told by her mom to clean her room.

**The Subject:**

**The Action:**

**The Acting Agent:**

**Sentence in active voice:**

2. It is through this essay that the proposed benefits of active exercise for Chronic Lower Back Pain (CLBP) will be examined.

**The Subject:**

**The Action:**

**The Acting Agent:**

**Sentence in active voice:**

3. A major was chosen by Shelby.

**The Subject:**

**The Action:**

**The Acting Agent:**

**Sentence in active voice:**

4. Five o'clock is the time in which Scott will be leaving.

**The Subject:**

**The Action:**

**The Acting Agent:**

**Sentence in active voice:**