

ACTIVE vs. PASSIVE VOICE

BRIEF 102 [Writing]



WHY WRITE IN THE ACTIVE VOICE?

- Omit needless words
- Be clear & concise: say what you mean
- Be considerate of your reader
- Take responsibility

ACTIVE VOICE

- ▶ Matt kicks Josh.
character action object

PASSIVE VOICE

- ▶ Josh is kicked by Matt.
object action character



ACTIVE VOICE

- ▶ Josh punches Matt in the gut.
character action object

PASSIVE VOICE

- ▶ Matt gets punched in the gut. (By whom?)
object action

TOOL: ZOMBIES



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I finally learned how to teach my guys to ID the passive voice. If you can insert "by zombies" after the verb, you have passive voice.



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EXAMPLES

- ▶ The road was crossed by zombies. (6)
- ▶ Zombies crossed the road. (4)

- ▶ The abandoned farmhouse is infested by zombies. (7)
- ▶ Zombies infested the abandoned farmhouse. (5)



How does active voice help to convey responsibility?

When you omit the subject, or separate the subject and the action with extra words, it's difficult for a reader to quickly tell who or what is responsible for a particular action.

- ▶ The gun wasn't loaded properly and it jammed.
- ▶ The gate was left open overnight and all the cows escaped.

LET'S PRACTICE

1. The cow was destroyed by friendly fire.
Friendly fire destroyed the cow.
2. If you park there, your car will be towed.
Acceptable use of passive voice.
3. The guns were carried by Andrew from the armory.
Andrew carried guns from the armory.
4. The Green Beret was recognized by some of his fans.
The fans recognized the Green Beret.
5. The decorations for the disco were provided by B Squadron.
B Squadron provided the disco decorations.
6. During the night the landscape was lit by the moon.
The moon lit the landscape at night.
7. New regulations were proposed.
Acceptable use of passive voice.
8. The SITREP was poorly written.
Acceptable use of passive voice.
9. The Ranger's panties were ruined in the dryer.
The dryer ruined the ranger's panties.
10. Incompetence was the reason the mission was a failure.
Answer 1: Incompetence caused the mission to fail
Answer 2: The mission failed because of incompetence.