

Active vs. Passive Voice

You can recognize passive-voice because the verb phrases will always include a form of be. Be careful not to mistake these verb phrases with linking verbs: (The sky is blue.)

Look for the following forms of the be verb:

- Am
- Was
- Were
- Is
- Are

Active Voice: the subject performs the action expressed in the verb.

Example: The clown juggled the balls.

Subject: clown Action: juggled Object: balls

Passive Voice: the subject receives the action expressed in the verb.

Example: The balls were juggled by the clown.

Subject: balls Action: juggled Action was performed : by the clown (*this phrase is another indicator that the sentence is written in passive-voice.*)

When to use Passive Voice:

- **When you wish to downplay the action:** Mistakes will be made, and lives will be lost; the sad truth is learned anew by each generation.
- **When you wish to downplay the actor:** In the scientific world, the actions of the researcher are ideally not supposed to affect the outcome of an experiment; the experiment is the main focus
- **When the actor is unknown:** The victim was approached from behind and hit over the head with a bat.