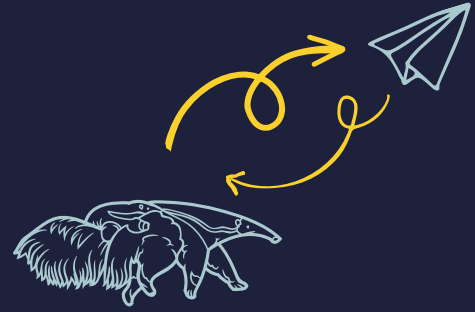


# Passive vs. Active Voice



## What is passive voice?

An action is being applied or performed upon a subject in a sentence, making it indirect. The order goes: Object → Action → Subject (if any)

Ex: The dark roast coffee was freshly brewed by the baristas each morning.

## What is active voice?

A subject performs an action in a sentence, making it direct. The order goes: Subject → Action → Object

Ex: The baristas freshly brewed the dark roast coffee each morning.

## Subjects, Predicates, and Objects in Sentences

- **Subjects** are "doers" of the action. The subject is usually a noun or pronoun and may contain modifiers.
- **Predicates**, or verb phrases, are the action being performed by the subject. They can contain modifiers as well.
- **Objects** are the receiver of the action. There are **direct objects** and **indirect objects**. **Direct objects** directly receive the action the subject performs, while **indirect objects** show for whom the action is being done.

## How can I tell the difference?

- Identify the subject, object, and action within the sentence
- The subject will always be the "doer" of the action
- If you identify the order of: **Subject → Action → Object**, the sentence is in **active voice**.
- If you identify the order of: **Object → Action → Subject (if any)**, the sentence is in **passive voice**.

# Using passive vs. active voice in writing

**Active voice** is usually the most effective way to communicate our ideas in most writing because the main idea is clearer and more direct. In most writing for emails, essays, and social messages, we use the active voice.



**Leslie records** the audio for their podcast.

Subject → Action → Object

**Passive voice** isn't as effective when trying to be clear, succinct, and direct. However, sometimes passive voice is necessary, especially when we want to emphasize the action itself rather than the doer of the action. For example, news reports, lab reports, and STEM papers usually use passive voice to emphasize the action that took place (when the subject is implied, not known, or not relevant.)



The chemical liquid samples **were measured** in the flasks.

Object ← Action

\*no subject is present because the subject is implied.

## More examples of passive vs. active voice

For more examples of how to effectively and purposefully use passive and active voice, and how to revise voice in your writing, check out our blog post on [Passive vs. Active voice](#) on our website.

## Book an appointment with us for more practice!

We can support you in any writing project!

- Class assignments
- Scholarship applications/grad school applications
- Research projects/presentations
- Job/internship applications
- Any genre of writing!

Feel free to book an appointment at any time to work with one of our tutors or professional writing staff on your writing; if you still have questions about active voice and passive voice, let your tutor know during the session and they can help you build more confidence effectively utilizing both voices in your writing!

