



Active and Passive Voice

Sponsored by The Center for Teaching and Learning at UIS



What is the difference?

- ♣ Difference is in the meaning
- ♣ Connected with the verb
- ♣ Does the subject act or is the subject acted upon?

Passive Voice

- ♣ The subject of the sentence *receives* the action.
 - The essay is being written by the student.
- ♣ More wordy sentences, less concise
 - Topics for the next essay are being considered by the students.

Active Voice

- ♣ The subject of the sentence *performs* the action
 - The student wrote the essay.
- ♣ Direct
 - Their friends often take them to interesting places.
- ♣ Less wordy sentences, more concise
 - The students considered topics for the next essay.

Changing from Passive to Active

- ♣ Find the subject in a "by the..." phrase, or consider carefully who or what is performing the action expressed in the verb. Make that agent the subject of the sentence, and change the verb accordingly.
 - The essay was written by Shelia.
 - Revise to: Shelia wrote the essay.
 - The big, green apples were left on the table by the professor.
 - Revise to: The professor left the big, green apples on the table.
 - The apple was eaten by Charlene.
 - Charlene ate the apple.
 - Clams are considered a delicacy by many people.
 - Many people consider clams a delicacy.

Can you tell the difference?

Passive: The potholes are being repaired by the workers. Hot, black, asphalt was poured into the potholes by the crew. Safe driving on the part of the public is appreciated by the road crew to insure their safety.

Active: The workers repaired the potholes. The crew poured hot, black asphalt into the potholes. To insure their safety, the crew appreciates the public driving safely.

Active: The professor graded the essays. Many students scored well because they used active voice. One student almost failed because he had too many passive sentences. The professor recommended the student to the Center for Teaching and Learning. What would the passive construction look like?