**Active Voice**



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Definition/Explanation

Although some disciplines prefer the passive voice, writing tends to be more clear, concise, and direct with the active voice. If you struggle with clarity and your writing tends to be confusing or wordy, try using the active voice. In the active voice, the subject (the do-er) of the sentence performs the action. Try revising for the active voice after you have written one or two drafts of your essay.

Examples

Passive: A decision was reached by the committee.

Active: The committee reached a decision.

Passive: There is a big gate guarding the park entrance.

Active: A big gate guards the park entrance.

How to Stay in the Active Voice

1. Identify the subject (the do-er, the actor) of the sentence and place the subject early in the sentence
2. Avoid “to be” verbs such as IS, ARE, WERE, AM and replace with action verbs
3. Remove as many prepositions (OF, IN, ON, FOR, BY, etc.) as possible
4. Reduce any redundant, unnecessary, or over-inflated language. Be direct and concise.

Example:

Dismissal ~~from~~ employment ~~is~~ an action taken ~~by~~ many **employers** when employees ~~are~~ late ~~for~~ work. (16 words)

Employers fire late employees. (4 words)

Practice: Put these Passive Sentences into the Active Voice.

1. Traffic is problematic due to the slowdown of hundreds of commuters, with the resulting increase of “late” employees.

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1. It is against policy for employees to be late to their jobs.

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1. There are many workers who have people who are depending on them to arrive on time.

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1. Being late is the worry of employees.

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1. Dismissal from employment is an action taken by many employers.

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1. Threatened job security has been the result of increased traffic congestion.

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Possible correct answers for Active Voice Exercise:

1. Traffic slows down commuters and makes employees late.
2. The policy forbids lateness.
3. Workers rely on each other, so they need to arrive on time.
4. Employees worry about being late.
5. Many employers will fire late employees.
6. Increased traffic congestion threatens employment.