In the **Passive Voice**, the agents doing the action become objects in the sentence. Passive verbs include any form of "to be" — *am, is, are, were, was, be, been, being*.

In the **Active Voice**, the agent or subject acts. Active verbs are clear, strong, and direct.

Writers should use the active voice instead of the passive voice unless there is a good reason for choosing the passive voice. Two good reasons for using the passive voice are:

- when the writer does not want to emphasize a subject.
- When the subject is not known.

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**Mini-Lesson #28**

More mini-lessons can be located at [http://dept.kent.edu/english/WritingCent/mini.htm](http://dept.kent.edu/english/WritingCent/mini.htm)
The verb "to be" (be, am, are, is, was, were, has been, have been) can precede a passive verb.

Passive: The party decorations were not taken down until yesterday.

Active: We did not take down the party decorations until yesterday.

Many times the word "by" follows passive verbs, or it is implied

Passive: The active voice should be used by writers.

Active: Writers should use the active voice.

How to change a verb from passive to active:

1. Identify the parts of the passive verb. Do you have any forms of the verb "to be" present before the verb? Is the word "by" present?

A dance was choreographed by Mr. Martins.

This verb is in the passive voice.

2. Next, identify the actor (who or what is doing the action) of the sentence. This usually follows the word "by," and it is the agent that performs something.

A dance was choreographed by Mr. Martins.

This is the actor.

3. Now make the actor into the subject and change the sentence so that it makes sense.

Mr. Martins choreographed the dance

This is the subject now.

You can enable Microsoft Word to check for verbs: From TOOLS, choose OPTIONS; next choose the SPELLING AND GRAMMAR tab. Check the last box, SHOW READABILITY STATS.

Be sure to carefully monitor any changes Microsoft Word suggests. They may not always be the best choice for your purpose. For example, the sentence "She is a doctor" would be identified as being in the passive voice; however, there is no better, more concise way to state that information.