



Writing Centre

Active & Passive Voice

Use either the active or the passive voice based on the content and context of your message.

In active constructions, the **grammatical subject** acts through the verb:

The **snake** swallowed the mouse.

In passive constructions, the grammatical subject is acted upon:

The **mouse** was swallowed by the snake.

Writers can often look for forms of the verb "to be" (be, am, is, are, were, being, been) to distinguish between active and passive constructions.

Advantages of Active Voice	Advantages of Passive Voice
<p>1. Clarity (Active constructions clarify the actor in a sentence.) PASSIVE: A goal was scored. ACTIVE: Jamie scored a goal.</p> <p>2. Concision (Active constructions use fewer words.) PASSIVE: The rope was shortened by Tim. ACTIVE: Tim shortened the rope.</p> <p>3. Strength (Active constructions employ the full force of the verb.)</p>	<p>1. Tact (Passive constructions obscure blame.) ACTIVE: Kim lost the file. PASSIVE: The file was lost.</p> <p>2. Objectivity (Passive constructions create the appearance of objectivity.) ACTIVE: Dr. Colburn associates certain eating habits with bad health.</p>



Advantages of Active Voice	Advantages of Passive Voice
PASSIVE: Amy flexed her muscles. ACTIVE: The muscles were flexed by Amy.	PASSIVE: Certain eating habits are associated with bad health.

References:

Purdue Online Writing Lab. (2011, July 13). *Active and Passive Voice*. Retrieved from

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/539/01/>

Developed by: Professor Derek Jenkins, The Writing Centre/ February 2013