

While passive voice is not actually grammatically incorrect, it is often stylistically better to use active voice.

What's the difference between active and passive voice?

The passive voice means that you have written the object of your sentence first and then put the subject of your sentence at the end. With passive voice, you can construct a grammatically correct sentence. However, passive voice can leave your sentence open for interpretation by the reader, especially when it's uncertain who or what is performing the action in the sentence.

Passive: An error was made to my account.
(Who made the error? The bank? You? Some identity thief who gained access to your account?)

Active voice means that your subject performs the action of the sentence in a way that brings clarity to your reader. It also helps eliminate weak verbs.

Active: The bank made an error to my account.

Let's look at another example of passive and active voice:

Passive: The bottle was recycled by Joe.
Active: Joe recycled the bottle.

With each sentence, think about who is doing the action. In the above example, Joe is the **subject**, he is the do-er. He is doing the recycling, and the bottle is the **object** of the recycling. Both sentences are essentially saying the same thing, but in the first one, the focus is on the bottle; in the second, the focus is on Joe.

In the first example you have to wait until the end of the sentence to find out who is doing the action, which means your subject has less impact. It's usually better to put your subject (the do-er) up front.

Let's try a couple of examples:

Passive: I was helped by the librarian.

Active: The _____ helped _____.

Passive: The crime scene was monitored. By whom? By what?

Active: _____ monitored the _____.

Converting from Passive to Active Voice

In active voice, the subject directly performs the action of the sentence.

subject active verb

Example: The tornado demolished the town.

The tornado *did* the demolishing.

In passive voice, the action is done to the subject by something else. The subject is the receiver of the action.

subject ---passive verb---

Example: The town was demolished by the tornado.

The town *received* the demolishing.

Directions: For each sentence, write **A** on the line if the sentence is in **active** voice or **P** if **passive** voice. If the sentence is passive, rewrite it in active voice.

_____ 1. Calvin quickly picked up the ball and tossed it to Diana.

_____ 2. The fairy tale book was read each night by our mother.

_____ 3. John's bus was met by Elaine.

_____ 4. The thief snatched the purse right out of Jessica's hands.

_____ 5. Kevin gulped down the icy, sweet soda.

_____ 6. His gleaming sword was brandished by the pirate as he mutinously challenged the captain.

_____ 7. After the quick review was finished by the class, the dreaded test was given by our teacher.

_____ 8. While the rain fell softly, Carol snoozed on the sofa.