



Passive Voice Be Damned

Or Damn That Passive Voice

Why?

It takes extra time, and we're on a time-crunch!

- It's clear.
- It's direct.
- It makes reading quick and easy.

Story

<https://centerforplainlanguage.org/why-active-voice-is-better-than-passive/>



80/20 Rule

Relax. It doesn't have to be 100% active voice.

There are times the passive voice sounds better, but it's less often than you may think.

- Use when you can't identify the subject.
 - The school was founded in 1950.
 - The office was broken into last night.
- To create an authoritative tone.
 - Visitors are not allowed at our school.
- To be tactful/noncommittal.
 - The meaning was somehow misinterpreted.

Grammarly says, "A good rule of thumb is to try to put the majority of your sentences in the active voice, unless you truly can't write your sentence in any other way."



Choose the active voice whenever possible.

Sentences written in an active voice flow better and are **easier to understand**. It places the emphasis on the subject of the sentence (what we can or can't do for you) and makes the sentence **more straightforward and concise**. Use the active voice to **engage**, for **readability**, to **persuade**, for **momentum**, to **connect**.

Passive Voice

1. “Students are expected to read over 40 books and meet to read and discuss the literature every other week in preparation for a competition held twice a year at a neighboring school.”
2. Our students will be enabled to use their G Suite accounts to complete assignments.
3. For those with digital capability, parents/guardians are encouraged to have students access the exceptional educational learning resources...

Active Voice – Avoid the Awkwardness

1. “We expect students to read over 40 books and meet to read and discuss the literature every other week in preparation for a competition held twice a year at a neighboring school.”
 - “Students read over 40 books and meet to...”
2. “We will enable our students...”
 - “Our students will be able to use their G Suite accounts to complete assignments.”
3. If you have the digital capability, we encourage you to let students access...” (or how about “...please let students access...”)

Examples to Drive the Point Home

Passive Voice

1. “Our continuing school educational program continues in the form of a hybrid hard copy/digital educational resources continuity of operations. The hard-copy homework assignments are mailed out to the parent/s/guardian/s. These assignments upon completion need to be returned to the school through the drop-off boxes outside the school cafeteria. The crates are identified by grade level.”
2. What to do about all this [passive voice text](#)?

Active Voice

1. “Our continuing school educational program continues in the form of a hybrid hard copy/digital educational resource continuity of operations. The hard-copy homework assignments are mailed out to the parent/s/guardian/s. Upon completion, these assignments need to be returned to the school through the drop-off boxes outside the school cafeteria. We identify the crates by grade level.
 - “Upon completion, please return them to the drop-off boxes outside the school cafeteria. Crates are identified by grade-level.”
2. Mesa High School [letter from the principal](#)

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I'm super happy to help anytime. If you have any questions or need any tutoring, just let me know.

Thanks!

