

## Module 3: MLA

### Topic 7 Content: Active/Passive Voice Notes

You should use the active voice when you write formally. Besides putting the emphasis on the subject of a sentence, the active voice is more precise, or more to-the-point. Also, active voice tends to use fewer words, making it easier for your reader to follow and understand. Active voice adds energy and force to your writing, making it not only easy to read, but more enjoyable.

While not often used, the passive voice exists for a reason. You should use passive voice when the performer of the action is unknown, or when you want to de-emphasize the performer of the action.

**Take a look at this example sentence:**

*An error was made on our quarterly report.*

In this instance, the writer does not want to identify the person responsible for the error; therefore, the use of passive voice is preferred.

*Several books have been removed from the classroom.*

Again, passive voice is better in this instance, as it is unknown who performed the action.

When you want to revise a cumbersome passive-voice construction and write it in the active voice, use these three easy steps to analyze and revise the sentence:

First, locate the main verb in the sentence. Ask yourself “WHAT was done?”

Next, determine who or what is doing the actions of the main verb. Ask yourself “WHO completed the action?”

Make the performer of the action the subject of the verb. Often, you can do this by reversing the order of the sentence.

Here is an example of revising a sentence from a passive-voice to an active-voice construction.

This sentence is passive. The lamp was broken by Andie.

WHAT was done? The lamp was broken. “Broken” is the main verb.

Who performed the action? “Andie” performed the action.

Reverse the sentence. Now the sentence “Andie broke the lamp” is active.

Make sure to implement these tips in your writing.