**Passive and Active Voice**

With **active voice**, the **subject** of the sentence **performs** the action of the verb.

Example: The students decided to finish writing their papers.

With **passive voice**, the subject **receives** the action of the verb.

Example: The decision to finish writing their papers was made by the students.

The first example sentence above, in **active voice,** is clearer and less wordy.

**Active voice is usually more direct and concise than passive voice. Many readers prefer it over passive voice, especially in academic writing.**

**But, although active voice is generally preferred, passive voice is sometimes used when it is not important to mention the subject or the writer prefers to avoid mentioning the subject.**

Example: The rally was held on the lawn.

The academic programs were cut.

**Changing passive voice to active voice:**

Identify who or what is performing the action of the verb. The word “by” will often point to the performer of the action. Make the performer the subject of the sentence and change the verb accordingly. See the examples below.

**Less effective Preferred**

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| --- | --- |
| **Passive (indirect)** | **Active (direct)** |
| The Spanish test was failed by the whole class. | The whole class failed the Spanish test. |
| The issues were debated by the candidates. | The candidates debated the issues. |
| The decision that was reached by the student government officers was not to participate. | The student government officers decided not to participate. |

Work Cited

Harris, Muriel. *Prentice Hall Reference Guide.* 7th ed. Upper Saddle River: Pearson

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