



Writing Skills

Passive and Active Voice

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Passive and Active Voice

Using the active voice is such an important skill for strong and effective writing. Unfortunately, very few students seem to know about the difference between passive and active voice. This worksheet begins with a clear explanation and discussion of active and passive voice, and follows with two brief exercises, the first requiring the identification of voice and the second requiring the transformation of voice within sentences from passive to active while retaining all the meaning. An answer key is included.

Name _____

Date _____

Passive/Active Voice

Sentences are characterized as being “passive” or “active”.

We say they are “in passive voice” or “in active voice”.

In active voice, something is doing something to something. Examples of active voice:

The dog chased the cat.

I swallow the pill every day.

Lucy finished the marathon.

In passive voice, something is having something done to it. Examples of passive voice:

The cat was chased by the dog.

The pill is swallowed by me every day.

The marathon was finished by Lucy.

Why is it important to identify whether a sentence is in the passive or active voice?

It's important because most of the time you should write in the active voice! Active voice sentences make your writing sound strong.

Of course, sometimes using passive voice sentences is the better choice. For example, the first sentence on this worksheet could be characterized as passive. The active version: “Being passive or active characterizes sentences” sounds awkward.

But most of the time: write in the active voice!

Directions: Identify the following sentences as passive (P) or active (A).

_____ The boy was followed by the goat.

_____ The goat followed the boy.

_____ The bee stung the baby.

_____ My cat always scratches our dining room table.

_____ When I was little, my brothers tickled me every chance they got.

_____ The next song will be sung by a newcomer to our stage.

_____ I finished all the homework that my teachers assigned me.

_____ We ate every cookie in the house.

_____ Feta cheese, pita, hummus, and pears were the foods always bought by Henry.

Directions: Change the following sentences from passive to active without losing or changing the meaning.

All the balls were thrown by the girl. _____

The table was cut in half by that man. _____

My favorite book was written by Margaret Atwood. _____

A little mouse was let go by the kind lion. _____

My heart was broken by a smooth talker. _____



Passive/Active Voice—Answer Key

Sentences are characterized as being “passive” or “active”.

We say they are “in passive voice” or “in active voice”.

In active voice, something is doing something to something. Examples of active voice:

The dog chased the cat.

I swallow the pill every day.

Lucy finished the marathon.

In passive voice, something is having something done to it. Examples of passive voice:

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Why is it important to identify whether a sentence is in the passive or active voice?

It's important because **most of the time you should write in the active voice! Active voice sentences make your writing sound strong.**

Of course, sometimes using passive voice sentences is the better choice. For example, the first sentence on this worksheet could be characterized as passive. The active version: “Being passive or active characterizes sentences” sounds awkward.

But most of the time: **write in the active voice!**

Directions: Identify the following sentences as passive (P) or active (A).

 P The boy was followed by the goat.

 A The goat followed the boy.

 A The bee stung the baby.

 A My cat always scratches our dining room table.

 A When I was little, my brothers tickled me every chance they got.

 P The next song will be sung by a newcomer to our stage.

 A I finished all the homework that my teachers assigned me.

 A We ate every cookie in the house.

 P Feta cheese, pita, hummus, and pears were the foods always bought by Henry.

Directions: Change the following sentences from passive to active without losing or changing the meaning.

All the balls were thrown by the girl. The girl threw all the balls.

The table was cut in half by that man. That man cut the table in half.

My favorite book was written by Margaret Atwood. Margaret Atwood wrote my favorite book.

A little mouse was let go by the kind lion. The kind lion let a little mouse go.

My heart was broken by a smooth talker. A smooth talker broke my heart.