

GRAMMAR FOCUS - ACTIVE VS. PASSIVE VOICE

AKA

Should the subject of a sentence initiate or receive the verb?

THE BASICS

- All sentences must contain a subject (noun - person, place, thing) and predicate (verb - expresses an action or a state of being) which express a complete thought.
- The subject is always placed before the predicate.
- In a sentence using active voice, the subject is the initiator of the predicate.
EX. *The student completed the test.* (subject - student initiates the predicate - completed)
- In a sentence using passive voice, the subject is the recipient of the predicate.
EX. *The test was completed by the student.* (subject - test receives the predicate - was completed)
*****Passive voice will always use a form of the linking verb “be” (was, am, is, are, been)*****

ACTIVE OR PASSIVE?

- Active sentences should be used in most cases because they are more concise and clear.
EX. *The Cougars won the football game.* (**ACTIVE** - succinct)
A football game was won by the Cougars. (**PASSIVE** - wordy)
The Cougars scored on the opening drive. (**ACTIVE** - clear who scored)
A touchdown was scored on the opening drive. (**PASSIVE** - unclear who scored)
- Passive sentences should be used when the initiator of the verb is obvious, unimportant, or unknown so it does not need to be included or the focus of the sentence.
EX. *The test will be given on Monday.* (it is obvious the teacher is giving the test)
Several questions were asked about the topic. (it is unimportant who asked the questions)
The students were dismissed. (it is unknown if they were dismissed by a teacher or the bell)