

Voice is an aspect of verbs (words that describe actions, activities, or states of being). In particular, voice indicates the relationship between the verb and its subject.

When a verb is in the **active voice**, the subject is *performing* the action.

e.g. Darin Peter Oswald has committed a crime.
 subject active verb

When a verb is in the **passive voice**, the subject is *receiving* the action or *being acted upon*.

e.g. A crime has been committed by Darin Peter Oswald.
 subject passive verb

Note that in the first example, the subject is the person *committing* the crime. In the second example, the subject is the thing *being committed*.

The passive voice is created using an extra form of the verb *to be*, plus the past participle form of a verb (which looks like the past tense). Compare examples of verbs in different voices below.

Tense (i.e. time)	Active Voice	Passive Voice
present	sings	is sung
present progressive	is following	is being followed
present perfect	has formed	has been formed
past	taught	was taught
past progressive	was walking	was being walked
past perfect	had desired	had been desired
future	will invite	will be invited
future progressive	is going to assist	is going to be assisted
future perfect	will have moved	will have been moved

Both voices are grammatically correct, but the active voice is shorter and more direct. The active voice also forces you to state who or what is performing the action, which makes things clearer. With the passive voice, it isn't clear who or what is performing the action unless you use the phrase "by -----".

e.g. A crime has been committed. [committed by whom?]

For these reasons, the active voice is often preferable.

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However, there may be situations where it is better to use the passive voice, such as

- when you want to emphasize the action or the affected thing
e.g. The shrubs **were flattened** by the heavy snow.
- when you don't know who or what performed the action
e.g. Our front window **was smashed** last night.
- when it doesn't matter who performed the action
e.g. 3 mg of sodium chloride **was dissolved** into 2 ml of water.
- when you want a statement to *seem* more objective and less subjective.
e.g. A diet rich in soluble fiber **has been proven** to lower cholesterol.

In academic writing, though, it's always better to tell the reader who did or said something.

e.g. L.F. Tinker has proven that a diet rich in soluble fiber lowers cholesterol.