

## Passive and Active Voice

Graduate students often think that the passive voice sounds more "academic" than active voice. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

Voice has to do with who is "doing the action" in a sentence. When the subject is doing the action, the sentence is in the active voice; when the subject is acted upon, the sentence is in the passive voice.

Here are some examples of active and passive voice

Passive:

"The complex biblical passage was parsed by me, not by the tutor."

In this sentence, the passage becomes the important part of the sentence rather than the fact that you, and not the tutor, did the analyzing.

Occasionally, you might want to use passive voice for emphasis. "The beauty of the campus at LPTS is loved and appreciated by all her employees."

In this sentence the word beauty is the important part of the sentence. If the sentence were to read "All other employees of LPTS appreciate the beauty of the campus," the emphasis would be placed on employees rather than the beauty of the campus.

Active:

Placing the emphasis at the beginning of the sentence makes for a shorter, clearer, and more direct sentence.

"I, and not the tutor, parsed the complex biblical passage."

You, the writer (not the tutor or the passage), becomes the significant word, in this sentence.

Avoid shifting between voices

"Professor X's class is considered boring by many students, but they take it anyway."

The first part of this sentence is in the passive voice but then switched to the active voice with "they take it anyway."

"Many students find Professor X's class boring, but they take it anyway."

In this sentence, both of the clauses are in the active voice.

**The active voice is more direct and dynamic than the passive because the "doer" comes at the beginning of the sentence and is not buried within the sentence.**

**Be bold, direct, and concise: be active, not passive!**