

11.3 Active and Passive Voice

Using Voice Correctly

Use the active voice whenever possible. Use the passive voice to emphasize the receiver of the action rather than the performer of the action. Use the passive voice to point out the receiver of an action whenever the performer is not important or not easily identified.

VERBS IN THE PASSIVE VOICE

My term paper *was typed* by my sister. (Unnecessary passive; better: My sister typed my term paper.)

The accident victims *were rushed* to the hospital by ambulance. (Emphasizes the victims rather than the ambulance.)

The library *is closed* on Saturdays during the summer. (Performer is not important and unknown.)

EXERCISE A: Distinguishing Between Appropriate and Inappropriate Uses of Passive Voice. Label the three necessary uses of the passive voice in the sentences below as A (appropriate). Label the other uses as U (unnecessary).

EXAMPLE: Jason was asked by his mother to answer the phone. U

1. A grand slam home run was hit by the catcher. _____
2. Lincoln was elected to his first term in 1860. _____
3. This sweater was knitted for me by my favorite aunt. _____
4. In 1983 the America's Cup races were won by Australia. _____
5. Many restaurants are closed on Mondays. _____
6. That model airplane was made by Paul. _____
7. Federal income tax returns must be postmarked by midnight on April 15. _____
8. Candidates will be judged by the voters on their merits not on their speeches. _____
9. I have been being followed by that dog for three blocks. _____
10. Dinner is being fixed by Mom right now. _____

EXERCISE B: Using the Active Voice. Rewrite five of the sentences that you labeled U in Exercise A. Change or add words as necessary to put each verb into the active voice.

EXAMPLE: Jason's mother asked him to answer the phone.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____