

Active & Passive Voice

Frequently Used In:
Speaking & Writing

Who ate the cake?

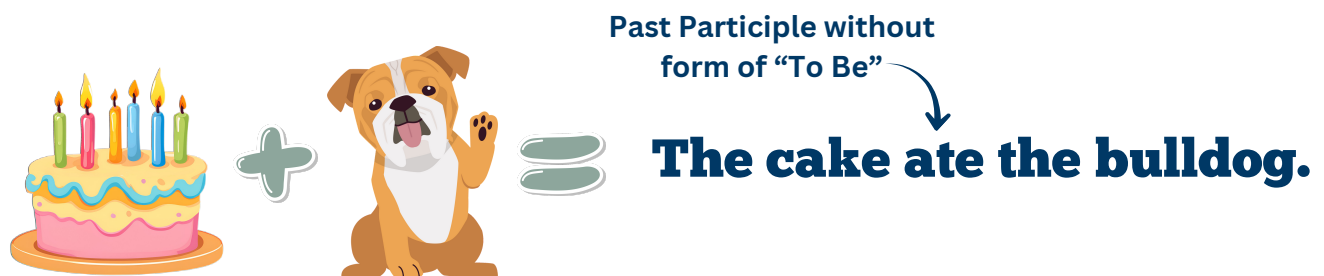
Active and passive voice indicate whether or not the subject of the sentence is doing the action or receiving the action. Look for forms of “to be” (be, am, is, are was, were, being, and been) in the sentence coupled with a past participle (a verb that typically ends in -ed, but not always). A sentence that uses a form of “to be” and a past participle to get the job done is in passive voice, while a sentence without the form of “to be” is in active voice. In most cases, use active voice to increase the clarity of your sentences. However, in cases where the action is more important than the actor (like the Methods section of a scientific paper), use passive voice instead of active voice.



In passive voice, the subject receives the action.



In active voice, the subject does the action.



If you only change the verb (and not the sentence structure) the results can be horrific.