



## Passive Voice

In sentences using the active voice, *the subject of the sentence does the action*. In sentences using the passive voice, *the object of the sentence does the action*.

Consider the following examples:

**Passive:** The fly ball was caught by Hernando.

\*The object, ball, completes the action instead of the subject.

**Active:** Hernando caught the fly ball.

\*The subject, Hernando, completes the action instead of the object

**Passive:** The coolant pumps were destroyed by a surge of power.

\*The object, pumps, completes the action instead of the subject

**Active:** A surge of power destroyed the coolant pumps.

\*The subject, surge, completes the action instead of the object.

## Correcting Passive Voice

### 1. Find the verb in the sentence.

*Example:* The cookies were stolen by the toddler.

### 2. Determine who or what is performing the action.

*Example:* The cookies were stolen by the toddler.

### 3. Rewrite the sentence so the subject – the who or what – performs the action.

*Example:* The toddler stole the cookies.

\*The who or what, toddler, completes the action now instead of the object

## **When is Passive Voice Useful?**

### **1. When the recipient of the action is more important than the subject.**

*Example:* A priceless Rembrandt painting was stolen from the Metropolitan Museum of Art yesterday by three men posing as janitors.

\*The painting is the focal point of the sentence so passive voice works in this situation.

### **2. When the subject is far less important than the recipient of the action.**

*Example:* State senator Joe Murphy was arrested last night on a charge of drunken driving.

\*The state senator is the focal point of the sentence rather than the police who actually arrest and complete the action; thus, passive voice works in this situation.

### **3. When the "who" or "what" is difficult to identify.**

*Example:* The cargo was damaged during the transatlantic voyage.

\*It is unclear what exactly could be doing the action in this situation; therefore, passive voice can be useful.