

Voice

A writer can arrange any given sentence in a number of different ways. Any given sentence can be arranged in a number of different ways by a writer.

The sentences in the above paragraph say the same thing. One uses a passive structure and the other uses an active structure. While passive structures have their place and can offer variety to writing, active structures should dominate most types of writing. So, how do you tell if your writing is active or passive?

A writer can arrange any given sentence in a number of different ways.

First of all, you must be able to identify the actor (subject) and action (verb) in your sentence. If you need help with this, see "Sentences."

*A writer can **arrange** any given sentence in a number of different ways.*

"A writer" is the actor and "arrange" is the action in the above sentence. Notice that the actor precedes the action. That tells you that this sentence is written in the active voice. Now look at our other version of the sentence.

*Any given sentence can **be arranged** in a number of different ways by **a writer**.*

The actor has not changed. "A writer" is still the one who is doing something. The action (verb) has changed only slightly. The verb "arrange" has been put in past tense ("arranged") and preceded by a helping verb ("be"). In this sentence, the action precedes the actor. That tells you that this sentence is written in passive voice.

So, what is it that makes active voice better than passive voice in most cases? The answers are clarity and brevity. Active sentence structures tend to be more clear, because the actor precedes the action. It's usually quite easy to locate the actor in an active sentence. With a passive structure, it can be a bit trickier.

Active sentences are also more brief.

A writer can arrange any given sentence in a number of different ways.--13 words

Any given sentence can be arranged in a number of different ways by the writer.--15 words

While two words may not seem like much, if your document is loaded with passive structures, that can add up to a lot of extra words.

Click [here](#) for an exercise in voice.

Links to Additional Information

- ["Active Voice, Passive Voice"](#) by englishclub.com