ACTIVE vs PASSIVE VOICE

Passive Voice
Def: the subject *receives* the action

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

Reasons to avoid it:
- It’s wordy and so dilutes your prose.
- It obscures the agent in the sentence.
- It’s boring to read.

Reasons to use it, sparingly and purposefully:
- when you *need* to hide the agent of the sentence
- when you want to emphasize the receiver of the action.
  Ex: As the time for harvest approaches, the tobacco plants *are sprayed* with a chemical to retard the growth of suckers.

Active Voice
Def: the subject *performs* the action

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

Reasons to use it:
- It makes your prose concise and energetic.
- It emphasizes the agent of the sentence—who’s doing what—making your prose easier to read.

Avoiding Passive Voice

An easy exercise: Go through your writing and CIRCLE all “to be” verbs (am, is, are, was, were). Most or many of these are likely to be parts of passive voice constructions. Revise these structures to make them active voice: put the *agent* of the action into the subject of your sentence.