

Why the passive voice sucks

Have you ever told your lover *You are loved by me ...* ?

Well?

Of course not. That's because the passive voice sucks. It makes your sentences unnecessary long. And it's impersonal and drab.

I love you sounds more personal and direct. It's more endearing and dynamic.

Companies and their lawyers often use the passive voice to try to avoid blame. Instead of saying, *I have made a mistake*, CEOs prefer to say: *Mistakes have been made*.

How to recognize the passive voice

The passive voice always uses a form of the verb *to be*. And quite often there's the word *by*, but not always.

A few examples of passive sentences (forms of the verb "to be" are in italics):

The work **has been** done by you.

The house **was** painted by him.

I **am** surprised by his admission.

I **have been** enchanted by his music.

The email **has been** sent.

Dinner **was** cooked.

How to make a drab passive sentence active

To go from passive to active you need to make your object the subject—you have to move the word at the end to the front. For example:

The work **has been** done by you.

You have done all the work.



Here's how to re-write the other examples:

The house was painted by him.	He painted the house.
I am surprised by his admission.	His admission surprised me.
I have been enchanted by his music.	His music enchanted me.
The email has been sent.	I sent the email.
Dinner was cooked.	He cooked dinner.

If you struggle to find the passive sentences in your writing, you may want to try the online [Hemingway app](#) – it highlights your passive sentences in green.