An Error Has Been Made: Using Active and Passive Voice Effectively
Practice Worksheet for Active and Passive Voice

Please read the sentences below and make stylistic changes, if necessary, to create more effective sentences that are appropriate to the situations described. There may be more than one way to write these sentences correctly. The point of the exercise is for you to think about the impact of using active versus passive voice in each situation.

(Situation: A notice is sent to colleagues concerning an unlocked office door and a theft.)

1. Someone did not lock the office door, and someone stole the portrait of Headmaster Derriere.

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(Situation: This is a sentence in an English paper about American author Paul Bowles.)

2. It is written by Bowles’s biographer that he did not like living in New York City, but preferred Tangier.

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(Situation: A school principal sends out a notice to parents about a mischievous prank played in the school halls.)

3. I regret to inform you that a student drew a moustache on the statue of Colonel Ledyard’s wife. When I discover the individual responsible, I will punish him by having him muck out the Avery Hill Stables every weekend for the rest of the year.

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(Situation: A child writes a science report stating the amount of time it took for a bowling ball to hit the ground when dropped from an attic window)

4. The bowling ball was dropped from an attic window that is thirty feet above the ground, and it landed in exactly one second.

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(Situation: This is a sentence in a school paper.)

5. The last play ever written by Shakespeare, The Tempest, is a comedy.

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The sentence pairs below are written in both the active and the passive voice. Please place a check mark in front of the version you prefer. Which sentence is more concise, crisp, and clear? In some cases, you may find that you like (or dislike) both versions equally.

_____ My parents still remember the day when the American forces arrived in their village to liberate the Italians from Hitler’s ravaging armies.
_____ The day when the American forces arrived in their village to liberate the Italians from Hitler’s ravaging armies is still remembered by my parents.

_____ The award will be given to the most deserving student in the 8th-grade class.
_____ The most deserving student in the 8th-grade class will receive the award.

_____ People now consider the term “witch doctor” to be offensive and inappropriate.
_____ The term “witch doctor” is now considered to be offensive and inappropriate.

_____ Do not disturb a sleeping dragon, or you may become its dinner.
_____ The disturbance of a sleeping dragon may cause you to become its dinner.

_____ Given the prevalence of Santa imposters this time of the year, the tugging of all white beards encountered is recommended by the Post Office.
_____ Given that Santa imposters are prevalent this time of the year, the Post Office recommends that you tug at any white beard you may encounter.

More questions? Contact the Avery Point Academic Center at 860-405-9058 or email us at apac@uconn.edu.