**Active Voice versus Passive Voice**

The first group of paragraphs came from this site: http://bit.ly/2SA9qTR

One of the best ways to improve your writing is to use more active voice. Instead of saying,

“The test was failed by most students,” it is better to say,

“Most students failed the test.”

The first sentence is passive voice, and it is more confusing to understand. Active voice makes sentences clearer and usually shorter, so you can get your point across more easily.

How to Recognize Active vs Passive Voice

1. Look at the Location of the Subject

In most sentences, you can check for active voice by looking at the subject of the verb, or the noun that performs the action. Every sentence has an action; who is doing that action? If the first noun in the sentence does the action, the sentence is usually active.

Take this example:

The teacher turns on the lights.

In this example, the first noun is “teacher”. The verb, or action, is “turns on”. Because the teacher is the one who turns on something, this sentence uses active voice.

Take another example:

The lights are turned on by the teacher.

In this example, the verb is still “turn on”. However, the teacher does the action, and she is the second noun of the sentence. Thus, this sentence is passive voice.

The site goes on to discuss the to-be verb, which is another pattern I had some difficulty with. They provide nice examples that make it easier to improve your writing by seeing how they reformat sentences to make them stronger. Be sure to check them out.

This next section is from a handout put together by Bill Koons, the leader of our Delta Writers' Group

We have all heard the admonishment to write in the active voice, but may not have a good clear idea of just what that means. Not only do we want to use verbs that are strong, and that are fresh and creative, but we need to be mindful of all of those forms of the verb "to be" that diminishes the impact of our words and ideas.

This includes: was, to be, are, were, etc., and these are often linked to gerunds (words ending in /-ing1), e.g. "were speaking," "are running," "to be teaching," et al. The writer can search for these after completing the first draft and decide whether they are needed, changed made stronger, more compact, and tighter. Several books on writing and journalism, stress this as the biggest vice a writer can have, and the most common reason writing is rejected.

Below, please find examples of passive sentences or fragments and their active voice versions. The fix is usually quite simple.

1. He was coming on to [her], making her feel uneasy.

a. He came on to her and she felt uneasy

2. He was running the whole season on empty.

a. He spent the entire season running. /OR/ He ran the whole season—on empty.

3. She was grateful for the attention.

a. She liked the attention.

4. He was swinging his fists, and crying all at the same time.

a. He swung his fists, barely able to see through the tears.

5. The Christmas carols were mind-numbing, playing as they were, over and over on the store's speakers.

a. Mind-numbing Christmas carols played over and over on the store's speakers.

6. She was struggling with all of the new concepts.

a. She struggled with all of the new concepts.

7. He was thought to be slow in both thought and action.

a. His parents thought him slow in his thoughts and actions.

8. Snow was falling over the whole continent, and was busily filling in all of the ditches they had dug.

a. Snow fell over the whole continent, filled in the ditches they had spent so much time digging.

9. He was thought to be teaching the difficult kids.

a. They thought he taught the difficult kids.

10. We had been playing catch in the front yard.

a. We played catch in the front yard.

11. After Fred and I had been reading and discussing the book for half an hour, he stopped.

a. After Fred and I read and discussed the book for half an hour, he stopped.

12. While he was getting situated, I started to read it to myself.

a. While he got situated, I read it to myself. [started in one of those words writers need to avoid—don't begin or start, just do—gods, I sound like Yoda!]

13. He was climbing the cliff's face as fast as he could.

a. He climbed the cliff's face as fast as he could.

14. 1 came into the room and he was studying.

a. As he studied, I entered the room.

15. Taking way too much time, he was studying the target before he threw the dart.

a. He took way too much time studying the target before he threw the dart.

16. We need to find an [item] that would be suitable for you.

a. We need to find an [item] suitable for you.

17. We're going to get you a new dog.

a. We're getting you a new dog.

I8. Something else had caught my eye.

a. Something else caught my eye.

19. —especially those who are riding motorcycles.

a.—especially those who ride motorcycles.