

writing exercise ii

As a group, consider each of the following prompts and be prepared to share your conclusions.

tool 3: activate your verbs

Prompt 1. To avoid a passive voice, Clark suggests that you make the main character carry out the action implied by the verb; thus, the active voice of “Bond climbed the stairs and...,” instead of the passive voice of “The stairs were climbed by Bond...” or “The stairs were climbed...” where the main character disappears. In an active sentence the main character accomplishes something; in a passive sentence, something happens to the main character (even if the main character does not appear). For each of the following sentences, identify those in the passive voice and rewrite them in active voice.

- Each meal is prepared with loving care by the award-winning chef.
- One-third of the applicants failed the entrance exam.
- Research will be presented by the students at the conference.
- In the early 20th century, thought was given to the structure of the atom by Ernest Rutherford.
- The fear of the FBI was that a recommendation would be made by the President to reduce their budget.

tool 4: be passive-aggressive

The goal of writing is clarity, and sometimes, as Clark notes, the passive voice provides that clarity because it calls attention to the receiver of the action; thus, “his pale eyes were frosted with sun glare...” emphasizes the effect on the eyes, which receive the sun’s glare. Here are some examples where the passive voice is appropriate; for each, rewrite the sentence using a more active voice and then explain why the passive voice is the better choice.

- The beaker was filled with a solution of acetic acid before adding the sodium carbonate.
- Hundreds of people were injured when the storm swept through town.
- After the decision is made, you have three days to appeal.