

Lecture 7

The passive voice

The passive: whodunnit?



Actor is not important

Two samples were assessed.



We assessed two samples.

Actor is unknown, unimportant or anyone

- The subjects were randomly assigned to one of three conditions.
- The therapeutical potential of fish oil was discussed in an editorial in this journal last year.
- Scientific texts must be spelled correctly.

Actor is not important

We assessed two samples.



Passive voice is leading in Methods section

The active voice is more precise

This method has been shown to be more effective.



This method is more effective...



X has shown this method to be more effective..

The active voice is more concise

- As an alternative method, a multicopy mean-field approach **can also be used**.
- A multicopy meanfield approach **is** an alternative (method).

The active voice is more concise

- When the new protocol **was applied**, acceptable or better solutions **were obtained** for each case.
- After **application** of the new protocol, each case **resulted** in acceptable or better solutions.

Active voice:
to underline your own conclusions and considerations

In summary, **we** provide, to the best of **our knowledge**, the first evidence for experience-dependent changes in white matter microstructure.

Active voice:
to emphasize a decision

We constructed a sampling frame and selection process **to minimize** selection biases and maximize generalizability of the accumulated evidence.

Combining the two: a better style

- **We** investigated the antiplaque and surface-active properties of mouth rinses containing..... Additionally the effect of daily use **was established**..
- **We** obtained informed consent from 48 adults and placed them into either a training group (n = 24) or an untrained control group (n = 24). .. This **was done** by....

Use the passive:

- if the actor is not important
- if describing general facts, relations or associations
- **and** to maintain cohesion..

Our analysis of scientific abstracts demonstrates that positive and—to a lesser extent—negative words are increasingly used over the past four decades. By contrast, **this increase** was absent for neutral and random words. **The increase in positive words** could not *be attributed* to general language tendencies as represented by the millions of printed books searched through in this study. Neither is **the increase** *driven by* one or two words, because all words showed increased frequency patterns. Even though the upward trend in positive word use was conserved in high impact journals, this trend was significantly less pronounced (fig 1↓). This difference could be the result of...

Use the active:

- to vary your style in Methods and Results
- to underline reasons or goals
- presenting your own thoughts