

# Passive Voice:

What is it?

- Object becomes subject
  - The boy threw the ball.
  - The ball was thrown.
- Constructed using “to be” verb + past participle
  - The ball was thrown.

# Passive Voice

- Subject is sometimes added at end using “by”
  - The ball was thrown by the boy.
  - Still passive voice
- Not a grammatical error
  - Passive voice is a stylistic issue that affects clarity
  - Isn't often found by computer's grammar checker
  - In some instances, passive voice is preferred
    - That building full of civilians was bombed.
    - We bombed that building.

# Passive Voice:

## Why shouldn't I use it?

- Since subject is often left out, the reader is forced to guess who is acting.
  - The money was stolen from the bank.
    - Who is acting here? Meaning is unclear.
  - John Dillinger stole money from the bank.
    - Now the reader knows who did what
- Passive voice is unnecessarily “wordy”
  - The meal was eaten by the family. (7 words)
  - The family ate the meal. (5 words)

The modern thermometer was  
invented in 1724.

Gabriel Fahrenheit invented the  
modern thermometer in 1724.

“Fear itself is to be dreaded, but that’s all.”

- FDR

“From both sides of the plate, hits are made.”

– Yogi Berra

“People not being judged by the color of their  
skin was dreamed.”

- Martin Luther King Jr.

“A bigger boat is needed.”

– *Jaws*

“My poker face cannot be read.”

– Lady Gaga

“100% of shots not taken are missed.”

– Wayne Gretzky