

## ACTIVE/PASSIVE VOICE

The game was played by children.

Children played the game.

The man from Henderson was bitten by a rattlesnake.

A rattlesnake bit the Henderson man.

Look for “to be” verbs and convert them into *action* verbs.

*To be* verbs often suggest the subject simply *is*  
—we want the subject *doing* something.

**Note:** Some “to be” constructions work,  
and not all passive constructions use “to be” verbs.

### PRESENT TENSE

First person:

**Singular**

I am

**Plural**

we are

Second person:

you are

you are

Third person:

he/she/it is

they are

### PAST TENSE

First:

was

were

Second:

were

were

Third:

was

were

Other variations and tenses:

been, will, be, being, become, have been, etc.  
(future, perfect, etc.)

### **Commas**

Use simple punctuation, commas and periods.

Editing Technique:

If punctuation marks other than commas or periods appear in your sentences, i.e.,

? -- ; : ! ( ) / & ...

revise so you no longer use that punctuation.

Formatting:

Do not use *italics*, CAPS, underline, etc.

**Homework:** Read “Commas” (PDF file on syllabus)

### **Proofing Techniques**

Read your text out loud. Listen for missing or extra words, or awkward phrasing.

Check each word in every sentence, and double check all nouns, verifying in particular proper nouns.

Begin at the end of your story and check backwards for appropriate placement of punctuation.

### **Grammar Item** **(basic, old-school lesson)**

Simple Sentence:

subject + verb (two-word minimum)

Complex Sentence:

phrases and clauses

(i.e.)        independent clause = sentence

+        phrases and clauses

a.k.a.        *dependent and independent*  
                  *essential and non-essential*  
                  *restrictive and non-restrictive*

### **Compound Sentence**

One independent clause (a sentence)

+        independent clause (another sentence)

+        a conjunction (coordinating)

+        a comma after first sentence

= compound sentence

Example:

The instructor returned the practice assignments, and he reminded the students to proofread carefully.

## Two Kinds of Series

### 1) Complex series:

Contains independent clause

+ (plus) at least *three* items

with *complex description*

+ (plus) comma before last conjunction

Example:

In order to pass this course, I must learn to write using journalistic style, cleanly and clearly, edit correctly, and understand the purpose of a news story.

### 2) Simple Series = AP style “5 pointer”

Simple description, same rules as complex series except for punctuation – the *final* comma gets dropped.

Contains independent clause (a sentence)

+ three items (simple description)

+ final conjunction

- (minus) final comma

= simple series

Example: I need to write clearly, edit correctly and understand journalism.

### **Content: Journalistic Style**

When in doubt, leave it out.

Construct simple sentences, easily read.

If you have any question regarding the clarity of your sentence, revise it until the question is gone.

### **Omit Needless Words**

Vigorous writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts. This requires not that the writer make all his sentences short, or that he avoid all detail and treat his subject only in outline, but that every word tell.

William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White, *The Elements of Style*, Macmillan, 1959, Rule No. 13.

### **Avoid Redundancies**

Words or phrases that refer to information already established; the unnecessary repetition of key words, phrases or ideas, i.e.,

8 a.m. Tuesday morning  
any typical  
never ever (worse: “barely never”)

Redundant and passive:

The words are currently being written by me now.  
vs. I write.

### **Use Adjectives Sparingly**

No vague references to “things” or “stuff” or “most” or “many” (non-quantifiable objects.)

Adjectives are first on list of words to delete:  
Use them (only) if they are *specific* and if they add *meaning* to the noun/subject modified.

### **A Few More “Don’ts”**

Do not use subjective words, i.e.,  
“seems,” “apparently,” “obviously.”

Also note: Direct causes are rarely attributable  
in news – events rarely happen “because”  
of a specific action, especially in crime.  
Use “allegedly.”

### **Sample Criteria for Writing News Stories**

#### A writing

- Story written in hard news style
- 1-sentence summary lead that captures most important information
- Each sentence has no more than 35 words
- Writing is clear and easily read
- 1- to 2-sentence paragraphs
- Information attributed correctly
- Quotes used and attributed correctly
- Use of simple vocabulary
- Use of mainly simple sentences but with some variety
- Use of active voice when possible