

Name _____ Date _____

Be Your Own Editor: Getting ACTIVE

Good reporters value words

They know that clarity comes from stating their ideas in the fewest words necessary. They choose words carefully, to give their readers a precise account of the story they are reporting.

Writers can't count on expression, gestures, tone of voice, and the ability to ask and answer questions as ways to clear up misunderstanding and provide fuller explanation. Writing must stand on its own. Writers have the responsibility to anticipate the questions their words plant in their readers' minds. They need to prune and shape each sentence to eliminate excess words, fuzzy thinking and muddled phrases.

Becoming your own editor

In your hurry to get your ideas on paper, don't expect your first version to be your best. The next step is to assume the role of editor, critic, and—most important—average reader, and question what you've said. With practice, you'll find that some of your greatest satisfaction as a writer can come from polishing and editing your own work—and making it shine.

Here are three techniques for improving your writing, whether it's for journalism or other classes.

1. Use the active voice of verbs, not the passive.
2. Tighten rambling sentences.
3. Say what you mean, mean what you say.

Use the **active voice** of verbs, not the passive. Not all verbs have both active and passive voices. Those that do express the effect of one person or thing upon another.

<i>Active:</i>	The reporter interviewed the principal. (5 words) Chess Club elected officers. (4 words)
<i>Passive:</i>	The principal was interviewed by the reporter. (7 words) Officers were elected by Chess Club. (6 words)

The active voice uses fewer words, while the passive voice takes longer to say the same thing and lacks a sense of action.

Note: Don't confuse the passive voice with linking and helping verbs in other verb phrases.

<i>Active:</i>	The reporter <i>finished</i> his story early.
<i>Passive:</i>	The story <i>was finished</i> early by the reporter.
<i>Linking:</i>	The reporter <i>was</i> Jerri McCullen.
<i>Active:</i>	Jerri <i>was looking</i> for our adviser. (Was= helping verb)

Directions: Rewrite the following sentences to eliminate the passive voice. Some contain more than one passive verb phrase; others require a subject for the verb when changed into active voice. After each sentence, note the word count before and after.

1. Many questions are being asked by students about the new athletic code.

Word Count: Before _____ After _____

2. Practice Quiz Bowl sessions are being offered to prospective members by Mr. Dale Swiggart, team adviser.

Word Count: Before _____ After _____

3. The Blazers' first football game of the season was played on a day when a record high was reached by the temperature.

Word Count: Before _____ After _____

4. Twelve students—five male and seven female—will be offered parts in "Too Late or Too Little," this spring's Drama Club play.

Word Count: Before _____ After _____

5. Such extracurricular activities as athletics and music will be eliminated or cut by the Byrnehurst Board of Education if the upcoming school levy is not passed by voters.

Word Count: Before _____ After _____