The latest news, technology, and trends in content creation

From the Editor...

Texting and posting messages may be a favorite pastime but let's not confuse the desire to write with the ability to write well.

You don't have to be a grammarian or lexicographer to write well. But you need to know the rules and how to apply them.

Our feature story offers tips on making your texts and posts clear and concise. •

Active-word substitutes

The "active voice" uses "action" verbs." Compare the take-charge verbs on the left with their wordy substitutes:
· **Propel** – set in motion
· **Transmit** – send along
· **Link** – join together
· **Emit** – send off
· **Constrain** -- hold back
· **Streamline** – make simpler
· **Maintain** – keep up
· **Lag** – stay behind
· **Gauge --** evaluate
· **Guide** – lead the way
· **Measure –** size up
· **Extend** – add on
· **Join** – come together
· **Survey** – look over •

Winning the 'active-voice/passive-voice' war

The "active voice" is a direct, take-charge writing style. It typically follows the simple noun-then-verb sentence format. Journalists and business writers use this format for clarity and efficiency.

Creative writers have more leeway, but the most skilled storytellers describe characters and settings with minimum words.

The passive voice forms wordy sentences, usually with too many prepositional phrases. An example is *"The vote of the people has been made historic."*

A change to the active voice is *"The people's vote made history."*

Think of the active voice as the doer and the passive voice as the one being "done in."

Here's another example:

The regulatory mandates were passed in 2010 by the Congress for OSHA to keep workers from getting injured on the job.

Problem: "Mandates" is acceptable as the sentence's subject. But the phrase "were passed by" is the passive voice.

Now here's the rewrite:

See "Active," page 2

Should writers use AI?

[Artificial intelligence](#) (AI) is finding its way into more functions these days. But not so much in publishing: editors are rejecting AI-generated content from writers.

The reason isn't just about loyalty to age-old grammatical rules or disdain for technology. Editors rightly want original content for their publications.

Their rejection also may stem from AI's "artificiality," or failure to duplicate the human ability to create and decipher insightful material.

Remember: AI is programmed information. The technology comes close to imitating human intelligence, but the formula remains the same: [info in is info out](#).

Writing is a special challenge for AI. Yes, it can distinguish nouns from verbs and complete sentences from fragments but falls short of delivering information based on human perception.

In fact, savvy audiences can spot AI-generated content because of its limited scope and robotic type errors.

Editors have been insisting on original content from writers long before AI was a thing. But more are accepting AI as an idea- or lead-generator for creating content. This gives writers the "green light" to make the technology a useful aide.   •

Val Bolden-Barrett, Writer, Editor, and Graphic Designer
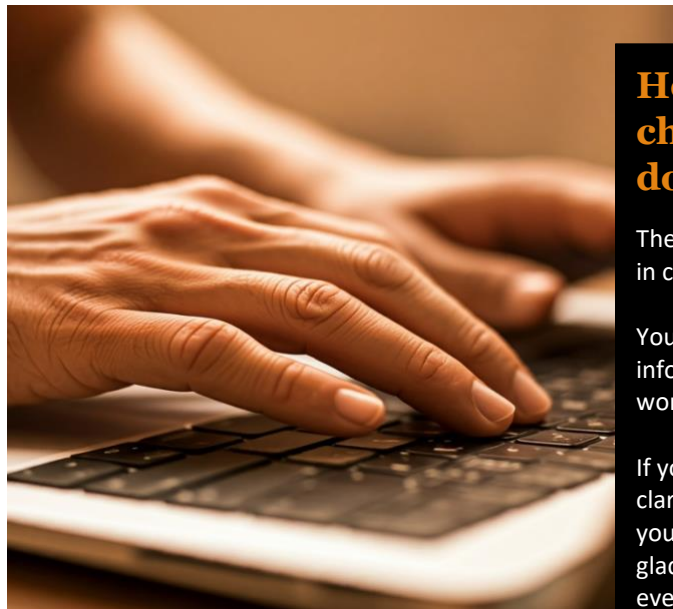
How much fact-checking should you do?

There's never too much fact-checking in creating content.

Your credibility depends on the information you can verify in your work.

If you're a hire, insist on excellence, clarity, and truth when writing for your company or clients. They'll be glad that you did if their content is ever challenged.   •

"Active" **Continued**

Congress passed new OSHA mandates in 2010.

Solution: "Congress" as the subject and "passed" as the verb give the sentence an active voice. The change gets rid of the prepositional phrases "for OSHA," "to keep workers," and "from getting injured."

Since OSHA is an acronym for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, no references to "workplace safety" are necessary.

Finally, "regulations" *are* "mandates," so using both words is redundant.

Choose words carefully

Constantly using the active voice might seem boring. But word choices make writing compelling, rather than redundant.

Simplify the writing process

A writer's first goal is to be understood. Another is removing fluff text. Do you need every word you wrote to tell the story? Strive for clarity and simplicity by…

• Using the "noun-then-verb" format.
• Reading entire drafts for comprehension.
• Deleting passive prepositional phrases, redundant words, and excess adjectives and other modifiers.
• Rewriting the draft and rewriting it again, if necessary.   •

Build a reference library

Add a grammar primer**,** word-usage manual, copyeditor's handbook, up-to-date dictionary, and thesaurus to your library. The editor recommends Prentice Hall's comprehensive *Handbook for Writers, The Copyeditor's Handbook* by Amy Einsohn and *The Copywriter's Handbook* by Robert W. Bly. Search Amazon, Barns and Noble, or Google for these titles.