Passive Verbs

Writers too often use passive verbs and passive construction. Count the number of times you use a form of "to be" in your essay. Often, these words should be replaced with more colorful and precise verbs. What action is really taking place? Try using stronger verbs.

****Forms of "to be"****

is

am

are

was

were

will be

will have been

has been

had been

would have been

being

to be

etc

**Passive construction**

there is

there are

it is

here is

Long veils are worn by brides in formal weddings.

Hillary Clinton is admired by many feminists.

**Other boring verbs**

exists

seems

appears

represents

presents

constitutes

offers

has

acts as

displays

makes

exemplifies

describes

characterizes

shows

occurs

contains

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Examples:**  | **Possible Solutions:**  |
| Veils are worn by brides in formal weddings. | Brides in formal weddings wear veils. |
| Betty seems to be an efficient typist. | Betty types efficiently. |
| Crest has been shown to be an effective, decay-preventing dentifrice. | Crest prevents cavities. |
| Something will be done about it by her mother. | Her mother will do something about it. |
| The discussion will be led by Mr. James Clubb. | Mr. James Clubb will lead the discussion. |
| There are many women who never marry. | Many women never marry. |