

## TRANSCRIPT LEVEL 3



### Tip 1: **USE ACTIVE VOICE & ACTION VERBS.**

Okay, let's get started with Concision Tip Number One: use active voice and action verbs. Stephen Fry once said, "We are not nouns. We are verbs. I'm not a thing, an actor, or a writer. I am a person who does things. I write, I act, and I never know what I'm going to do next. I think you can be imprisoned if you think of yourself as a noun." You know if you think about it, nouns, or people, places, things, and ideas—they take on meaning based upon what actions they do.

And it's for this reason, if you think back to Level Two, you recall that our brains want to know the "who" first and the action second. So just as with clear writing, concise writing will emphasize who did what. If you've ever been told to use active voice instead of passive voice in your writing, this is the logic behind that advice. Writing that's judged as stronger or better is often tailored to fit readers' expectations that actors should come before the act.

Active voice uses a "who did what" structure, but passive voice uses a "what was done by whom" structure. So, you can see, even in their basic structure, active voice tends to be more concise than passive voice. One of the key ways you can transform your writing from passive voice into active voice is by using action verbs instead of being verbs. Action verbs make your writing more concise. They captivate readers who appreciate action, readers like Stephen Fry.

One way to remember this advice is to recall that the highest grossing film genres are action and adventure movies. People want to get to the action as quickly as possible and they want things to move along. Active voice helps you accomplish this. So, before we start to look at examples, let's quickly define what we mean by "being verbs." Being verbs are the most basic infinitive version of a verb. They start with "is," "am," "was," "were," "be," "being," "becoming," or "are." Being verbs are concision culprits because instead of communicating action, they communicate existing or being.

Let's look at some examples. As I read through these, I want you to identify

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the concision culprit that gets in the way of us knowing who did what—in that order. All right, Version Number One: "The report was distributed Friday." In this sentence, the actor, or the who, is missing.

As a result, the writing lacks clarity, which may require more follow up. In other words, more words and more back and forth in the long run to fill in the blanks. Who distributed the report on Friday? That's a key question that may get asked by listeners. Let's look at a slightly better version: "The report was distributed by Katie." Okay, in this case, we know who is doing the action. However, you notice that in both Version One and Version Two, we still have the verb "distributed" accompanied by it's "to be" verb "was distributed."

Let's try to remove the being verb by placing the actor in the main subject position of the sentence. Here we go: "Katie distributed the report on Friday." I love this example because it shows that by removing the being verb you're able to reduce wordiness and provide more clarity about who did what. Let's look at another example. As you read, identify the clarity culprit. Here goes: "A feeling of frustration is the main effect of the previous board meeting." By relying on the being verb "is" in this sentence, we don't get a clear picture of who did what. Let's look at a revised version: "The previous board meeting frustrated everyone." Perfect—in this sentence, we have a subject, "the previous board meeting," that is enacting an action; it is causing frustration, it is frustrating everyone. Much more concise, much clearer.

Let's look at one more example: "There was a failure on the part of the marketing manager to compile a realistic editorial calendar." Okay, once again, the main verb in the sentence is a being verb, the verb "was." Here's a new version: "The marketing manager failed to compile a realistic editorial calendar." Okay, let's do some math.

Throughout this entire level, as we provide examples, we're going to share with you how many words we were able to reduce by implementing these concision tips. So here we go. In the very first example, the one about the

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report being distributed by Katie, we saved two words. In the second example, we saved five words, and in the third example, we saved seven words. You got to your point much faster and more clearly—excellent work! Now of course, just like in every lesson that we teach, there's always a disclaimer, or an exception, to the rules that we're sharing. Sometimes it's appropriate and better to use passive voice. You just want to make sure anytime you're using passive voice, you're doing it with intention and awareness.

So here are two times that it's better to use passive voice than active voice. Number One: if you don't want to assign accountability or culpability. We talked about that in Level Two, if you remember, and essentially that means you don't want to call out the "who" very directly because it will make someone feel like they are being attacked or blamed for an action. Exception Number Two: sometimes passive voice allows you to emphasize information that needs to get featured. Let's look at these two exceptions in action.

Here are two examples of when you'll want to use passive voice instead of active voice. Alright, Example Number One: "The review process is carried out in California by the National Advisory Group." The reason why passive voice works well in this example is because you want to emphasize the review process, not necessarily who is carrying it out.

Example Number Two: "Prior authorization requests should be submitted by the healthcare provider who will be rendering physical medicine services." This is another example of using front-loading, or putting the most important information first, instead of prioritizing active voice. Despite the exceptions, overall active voice is almost always better. It will not only help you reduce word count, but it will also add clarity to your writing. Use passive voice only as a stylistic or strategic choice, but make active voice your default in all of your writing.

Alright, let's move on to Tip Number Two. Go ahead and check out the next video.