Summer challenge #4: Be more active

Before you think I am going to challenge you to move more, let me clarify that this is a writing challenge, not a fitness challenge. I am talking about **active voice**. Originally, I wanted to name the post “Be less passive,” but that sounded a bit too negative.

Most every writing teacher, and probably even your own English teacher in school, makes a point of telling students to avoid the passive voice. And yet, especially in business writing, we see people using passive voice without any measure. “The company was founded by John Doe,” they write. “The management team will achieve its objectives by implementing long-standing traditions,” they add. And on and on.

Passive voice is dull. It’s boring. You know why? Because it isn’t active! Passive voice is the equivalent of the couch potato, who just sits around, staring mindlessly at the television. The couch potato often feels bored (and boring). The couch potato hasn’t done much lately so he doesn’t have much to say.

Active voice is more like an athlete than a couch potato, and therefore, has far more energy and zest for life. Active voice is the runner while passive voice is the straggler. Active voice gets to the point much faster, while passive voice is busy drawing out its words.

You see why active voice gives your writing more punch. It makes it lively. It makes it more interesting.

So, challenge yourself to use the active voice as often as possible. Because really, do you want your writing to resemble a couch potato?