Writing for Action

Grammar

- Use active voice: subject performs the action
- Avoid passive voice: action is performed upon the subject
- Avoid ambiguous wording
- Replace noun phrases with verbs (~~make a decision~~/decide)

Discuss:

- Which grammar rules trip you up?

Structure

- Use plain (not formal) language
- Begin with the important information
- Pretend every word costs money
- Avoid acronyms
- To fix out-of-focus ideas, correct sentence structure or punctuation

Discuss:

- What formal terms do you replace/simplify?

Layout

- Use line breaks or short paragraphs
- Consider bulleted or numbered lists
- Put data in a chart for visual learners
- Add an image for clarity
- Add white space for easy reading

Discuss:

- Do you prefer bullets, numbers, or no lists?

Closing – Writing for Action

"Verbs are the most important of all your tools. They push the sentence forward and give it momentum. Active verbs push hard; passive verbs tug fitfully."

This was *written by* William Zinsser.

William Zinsser **wrote** this.

Resources: Writing for Action

LinkedIn Learning

- Use Active Language in Your Writing (~ 3 minutes)
  https://www.linkedin.com/learning/tips-for-better-business-writing/use-active-language-in-your-writing?u=50844473
- Passive Sentences & Exercises (~ 10 minutes)
  https://www.linkedin.com/learning/writing-with-flair-how-to-become-an-exceptional-writer/passive-sentences?u=50844473
- Exploiting the Power of Verbs (~ 3 minutes)
  https://www.linkedin.com/learning/writing-with-impact/exploiting-the-power-of-verbs?u=50844473
- Ambiguity & Exercises (~ 7 minutes) https://www.linkedin.com/learning/writing-with-flair-how-to-become-an-exceptional-writer/ambiguity?u=50844473

Online Sources

- Active Versus Passive Voice
  https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/academic_writing/active_and_passive_voice/active_versus_passive_voice.html

More Resources: Writing for Action

More Online Sources
- Mary Dash's Writing Tips https://www.plainlanguage.gov/resources/articles/dash-writing-tips/
- Passive Voice https://www.grammarly.com/blog/passive-voice/
- Choose Vocabulary that Communicates in Email Writing https://businesswriting.com/use-clear-business-vocabulary-in-email-writing/
- Our Brand in Words https://www.jmu.edu/identity/our-brand-in-words/index.shtml
- Choosing Passive Voice https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/academic_writing/active_and_passive_voice/choosing_passive_voice.html

JMU Talent Development Resource Collection Books
- *10 Steps to Successful Business Writing* ©2008 by Jack E. Appleman
- *The Hamster Revolution: Stop the Glut* ©2008 by Mike Song, Vicki Halsey & Tim Burress
- *The Bliss or "Diss" Connection?: Email Etiquette for the Business Professional* ©2007 by Cherie Kerr