Passive and Active Voice

Just what are active and passive voice?

These terms refer to the relationship between a subject and its verb.

Look at the following sentence:

1. The research was reviewed.

In this sentence, the word *research* is the subject and the phrase *was reviewed* is functioning as the verb.

Now ask yourself the following question: Is the subject doing the action in the sentence? In other words, in this particular sentence, is the subject doing to reviewing?

*Obviously, the answer is NO!!*
In other words, the subject is being *acted upon*, or it is a **passive** recipient of the action.

Now look at the next sentence:

2. We reviewed the research.

In this sentence, the subject is the word *we* and the verb is *reviewed*. The difference between this sentence and the first one is that now we have the subject *doing* the action – it is the **active** doer of the verb.

Notice something else. In the first sentence, if we want to know who is doing the action, we have to add on a whole new phrase:

3. The research was reviewed by us.

Doesn’t this sound awkward? It also takes six words to say what the second sentence said in four words.
SO ....

The general rule of thumb is to avoid passive voice whenever possible!