Active Voice - The subject is performing the action.

Subject = actor
Transitive verb in active voice
Direct object

The gentleman opened the door.

Passive Voice - The subject receives the action or the actor is unclear.

Subject = object of action
Transitive verb in passive voice
(optional) by actor

The door was opened by the gentleman.
The car was stolen.

Active voice is often more effective and concise, creating a clearer, stronger sentence. In order to change a sentence from passive voice to active voice, make the subject of the passive sentence the direct object and make the actor the subject of the active sentence.

Passive/Weak - Sentences in which the object is being acted upon are preferred by most instructors.

Active/Strong - Most instructors prefer sentences in which the subject is performing the action.

(Tip: Using a single verb creates an active sentence, while using verb phrases often creates passive sentences.)

However, passive voice is acceptable in two situations:
1) When the actor is unknown
   Ex. Mistakes were made.
2) When the action is more important than the actor
   Ex. The antique toys were sold on Ebay by the collector.  

(08/06)