Guideline 4: Use the active voice
The active voice shows who is responsible for doing what, which tends to eliminate confusion.

Passive voice: The bill was sent to you on Sept. 1.
Active voice: We sent you the bill on Sept. 1.

How do I do this?
• Use personal pronouns, such as “I” or “we,” or name the person doing the action.
• Place the subject (the “doer”) at the beginning of the sentence.
• Look for “deadly 7” verbs: am, is, are, was, were, be, and been. This signals you might be using passive voice in your sentences and may need to rework your sentences to be more direct.

For example:
“It was decided...” is a passive statement.
“We decided...” is an active statement.

Why do this?
• Your readers will know who is doing what, which will help them quickly grasp your message.
• Your sentences will tend to be more clear and concise.
• Research shows that customers translate passive sentences into active sentences in their heads anyway.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do</th>
<th>Don't</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Director wrote the memo yesterday.</td>
<td>The memo was written yesterday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject - Action Verb</td>
<td>Passive Voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brad threw the ball.</td>
<td>The ball was thrown by Brad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We require you to show identification.</td>
<td>Identification is required.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More Examples
• Before: The applicant must give an explanation for his or her delay.
• After: You must explain the delay.