DIFFERENCE BETWEEN VOICE & TENSE
CORRECTLY FORMULATING THE SENTENCES THAT BUILD EXCELLENT PAPERS

THE BIG PICTURE
The concepts of voice and tense are sometimes confused. On quite a few occasions, a student has heard that the paper cannot be written in “passive” voice and concludes that the paper cannot be written in the past tense (i.e. The man yelled as opposed to the man yells or will yell). The following handout draws a distinction between the two concepts of voice and tense. Essentially, voice pertains to how the verb relates to the subject, while tense pertains to how the verb relates to time.

TENSE
It is all about time.

VOICE
It is all about the subject

PUTTING IT TOGETHER
It is all about the subject

Voice

I conquer

the verb does the action

I conquered
I conquer
I will conquer

I conquered
I conquer
I will conquer