Active and passive voice

What does “active voice” mean?
The subject in a sentence written in the active voice performs the actions of the verb.

- Example: The mouse ate the cheese.

What does “passive voice” mean?
The subject in a sentence written in the passive voice receives the action of the verb.

- Example: The cheese was eaten (by the mouse).
  (Notice how the phrase “by the mouse” is optional.)

When should I use active voice?
You should use active voice more often than passive voice, especially in nonscientific writing situations. Sentences written in the active voice are most often the most direct and clear kinds of sentences.

- Example: The sentence “The dog jumped out of the car.” [Active voice] is much clearer than the sentence “The car was jumped out of by the dog.” [Passive voice]

When should I use passive voice?
Sometimes, it is necessary to use the passive voice, especially in scientific writing. Writing an indirect sentence is sometimes rhetorically effective in some situations. Sometimes the subject of a sentence is unknown, unimportant, obvious, or the action itself and what is acted upon are more important. These are cases when the passive voice is appropriate.

- Example: The tests were administered (by the researcher) to the students, and they were given thirty minutes each to complete them.
  (Note that in the above sentences, the researcher are not the focus; the students (who are the subjects of a study) and the time they have to complete the tests are most important.)

How do I write sentences in the active voice?
The doer of the action + the action of the doer.

- Example: The mouse ate the cheese.

How do I write sentences in the passive voice?
The receiver of the action + what is being done to the receive (+ “by” + the doer of the action)

- Example: The cheese was eaten (by the mouse).
  (Note that the verb in a passive sentence is formed by a form of be + the past participle of the main verb. Also, the phrase “by” + the doer of the action is optional.)