

Causative verbs

Definition

Causative verbs indicate that someone or something causes or enables something to happen.

Construction

These verbs can be used in any tense, or with modal verbs, according to the usual rules. It is important to learn whether they are followed by the bare infinitive or the infinitive with 'to'.

Verb	Meaning	Construction
let	to allow something to happen by not preventing it, or by giving permission	Subject + causative verb + object + bare infinitive My boss lets me leave early. I'm letting my hair grow long.
have	to arrange for someone to do something	I'll have my assistant send you a copy.
make	to compel someone to do something	They should make him pay for the damage.
permit/allow	to give permission to someone to do something – more formal than 'let'; often used in the passive	Subject + causative verb + object + infinitive The company permits all staff to take unpaid leave in the winter. They allow their children to stay out later at the weekend.
get	to arrange for or persuade someone to do something	I got my colleagues to help me.
force	to compel someone to do something; stronger than 'make', often implying violence or strong pressure	The robbers forced the bank staff to hand over the money.
require	to order someone to do something, especially because of a rule or law	The airline requires all passengers to check in two hours before the flight.
want / would like	to wish for something to happen	Gina wants Helen to help her. [Gina wants that I help her. ✗] Would you like me to come with you? [Would you like that I come with you? ✗]
help	to make it possible or easier for someone to do something	Subject + 'help' + object + bare infinitive <u>or</u> infinitive She helped me (to) carry the bags. [more common without 'to']

Note that some passive forms are also possible. For example:



- At school, we **were made to eat** all our vegetables.
- All visitors **are required to show** a valid form of ID.

Uses

There are various uses depending on the meaning of the verb. It is also important to note that the verbs in the table above might also have other meanings, and be used with other structures.

'To have someone do something' or 'to get someone to do something'?

These are very similar but 'get' is more informal. Also, there can be a subtle difference in the meaning. 'Have' often means that someone uses their authority in order to make something happen:

- The manager **had** the technician **fix** the problem right away.

And 'get' can suggest an element of persuasion.

- I **got** Kevin to **represent** me at the meeting.

To have/get something done

This structure is also a form of the causative. The focus is often on the action rather than the person who does it.

Construction

'to have'/'to get'	object + past participle
to have/get	the windows cleaned

'Have' and 'get' mean the same but 'get' is more informal. There are other subtle differences between them. This form has various uses – here are some examples:

Uses	Examples
Solving a problem	I need to have/get my brakes fixed.
Paying someone to do something	We had the new ingredient tested and certified . ['had' is more common in the past]
When something negative happens, not arranged by us	I had my car stolen last week.

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