



Causatives: Have and Get

We use a causative verb when we want to talk about something that someone else did for us or for another person. It means that the subject caused the action to happen, but didn't do it themselves: maybe they paid, or asked, or persuaded the other person to do it. For example, we can say:

- I cleaned my house. (This means I cleaned it myself.)

If I paid someone to clean it, of course I can say:

- A cleaner cleaned my house.

But, another way is to use a causative construction. So I can also say:

- I had my house cleaned.

In a sense, using a causative verb is similar to using a passive. The important thing is that the house is now clean. We don't focus on who did the cleaning.

Have something done (have + object + past participle)

We usually use 'have something done' when we are talking about paying someone to do something for us. It's often used for services. The form is 'subject + have + object + past participle'.

- I had my car washed.
- John will have his house painted.



Get something done (get + object + past participle)

We can also use 'subject + get + object + past participle'. This has the same meaning as 'have', but is less formal.

- The students get their essays checked.
- I'll get my hair cut next week.
- He got his washing machine fixed.

Have someone do something (have + person + infinitive)

We can also use the construction 'subject + have + person + infinitive'. This has a very similar meaning to 'have something done', which we've already talked about, but this time we say who did the thing – we talk about the person who we asked to do the thing for us.

- I had the electrician look at my broken light.
- The doctor will have the nurse call the patients.
- The teacher had the students write the answers on the whiteboard.

Get someone to do something (get + person + to + infinitive)

Finally, we can also use the construction 'get + someone + to + infinitive'. Again, this means that you cause the other person to do the action, maybe by paying them to do it, or by asking them to do it, or by persuading them to do it.

- She gets her son to do his homework by promising him ice cream when he's finished.
- I got the cleaner to clean under the cupboards.

Sometimes, this construction has the feeling that we needed to convince someone to do something, while the other constructions on this page are neutral.