



CAUSATIVE VERBS

HAVE and GET

HAVE SOMEONE DO SOMETHING

To ask someone to do something for us
We use have + person + infinitive when we talk about someone doing something for us which we ask or instruct them to do. It emphasises the person who does something rather than the process/action:

- We are having a mechanic look into the problem.
- I will have my secretary send you the email tomorrow.

GET SOMEONE TO DO SOMETHING

To cause someone to do something by asking, persuading, or telling them to do it. This structure *is often used when there is a sense of difficulty*.

It emphasises the person who does something rather than the process/action:

- I'll have to get John to do this report. I won't be able to finish it in time.
- I can't get the children to sleep at bed-time. They never seem to be tired!

HAVE SOMETHING DONE agent is optional (by someone)

We use have + object + past participle when we talk about someone doing something for us which we ask or instruct them to do. It emphasises the process/action rather than who performs it:

- I've just had my hair cut.
- We are having our house done up optional (by a decorator).

GET SOMETHING DONE agent is optional (by someone)

To convince or encourage somebody to do something.

This structure emphasises the process/action rather than who performs it:

- I got my suit cleaned yesterday.
- He had his car serviced optional (by his local garage).

SOMEONE AFFECTED BY AN ACTION THEY DID NOT CAUSE

HAVE SOMETHING DONE

- They had their car stolen.
- They had their homes destroyed by the hurricane.
- I had my leg broken in a football match.

GET SOMETHING DONE

- He got his heart broken.
- I got my finger caught in the door.
- I got my email account hacked.

TALKING ABOUT AN EXPERIENCE

HAVE SOMEONE DO SOMETHING

- We had a man singing to us as we sat in the restaurant having our meal.
- I had an old woman push in the queue in front of me at the supermarket checkout.
- All my life , I've had people tell me that I don't look my age.

DOING SOMETHING YOURSELF

GET SOMETHING DONE (AS OPPOSED TO DO SOMETHING) : FOCUSES ON THE RESULT

- I want to get my assignment finished on time.
- I want to get the house cleaned before the guests arrive.

ALTERNATIVE TO THE PASSIVE VOICE

The causative construction is sometimes used as an alternative to the passive voice.

Compare the following:

- He had his car serviced regularly so it never broke down.
- His car was serviced regularly so it never broke down.