

## CAUSATIVE VERBS

Are you looking for material  
to prepare for your  
Cambridge English Exam?



# 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.