

The causative

English Grammar · B2

have something done

The causative

have

+ thing + past participle

I had my hair cut

get

more informal

I got my car fixed

The causative: reference card grid

The **causative structure** expresses having someone else do something for you, rather than doing it yourself.

Structure: have + +

I had my hair cut yesterday.

I got my hair cut yesterday. (Not by myself)

We are having our house painted.

We are getting the house painted. (By someone else)

Note: Pay attention to word order: **have + object + past participle**. *I had my car repaired*. (I sent it to be fixed) differs from *I repaired my car*. (I did it myself).

get something done

get + object + past participle functions similarly to *have*, but is more **informal**.

I need to get my phone fixed.

*I need to get my phone repaired.

She got her photo taken.

She got a photo taken. (By someone else)

Note: In causative structures, *have* and *get* are largely interchangeable; *get* carries a more casual, conversational tone.

Common Errors

- × ~~I cut my hair yesterday.~~ (Actually at the salon) → ✓ I **had my hair cut** yesterday. — Using the active voice implies you cut it yourself with scissors.
- × Incorrect word order: ~~I had cut my hair~~ is the past perfect tense (“I had already cut it before then”), not causative; the causative form is *have + **object** + past participle*: I had **my hair** cut.
- × ~~I had my hair cutted.~~ → ✓ ...cut. — The past participle in the causative structure must also be correct: *cut-cut-cut* remains unchanged.
- To ask **someone** to do it: *have + person + **base form***, *get + person + **to do***: *I'll have John **fix** it. / I'll get John **to fix** it.*