

Causative Verbs

Causative verbs are used to demonstrate that someone (or thing) causes another person (or thing) to take some action. These verbs are frequently used in both writing and speech, so memorizing what they are and how to use them can greatly improve clarity and fluency. There are five causative verbs in the English language:

Make suggests the use of force (physical, psychological, etc.).

Have is less forceful than make; it implies engaging or employing someone to do something. **Let** is synonymous with "allow" or "permit."

Get suggests the use of persuasion or encouragement.

Help is synonymous with "assist" or "aid."

These verbs require a specific sentence pattern: **the causative verb** (cv) must be followed by an <u>object (obj)</u> (the person or thing being forced, allowed, persuaded, etc.) and another **verb** (v) (the resulting action).

When I was in high school, I **made** <u>my sister</u> **do** my homework **cv obj v**Now that I'm a college student, I **get** <u>my roommate</u> **to do** it.

Different causative verbs require different forms of the verb that follows. The number and tense of the causative verb may change, but the rules for the verb that follows remain the same.

The verb that follows make, have, and let must be in present tense.

In exchange for doing my homework in high school, I let <u>my sister</u> **borrow** my scooter.

cv obj v

Now that I'm a college student, I have <u>my roommate</u> **do** it.

cv obj v

When I go to graduate school, I will probably **make** <u>someone else</u> **do** my homework.

cv obj v

The verb that follows get must be in the infinitive form.

When I was in high school, I **got** <u>my sister</u> to do my homework. cv obj v

When using the causative verb help, you can use either the simple present tense or infinitive form of the verb that follows—whichever sounds better to you.

When I was in high school, my sister helped me do my homework.

cv obj v

In college, my roommate helps me to do it.

cv obj v



Notice how the causative verb patterns reveal different relationships in the following passage:

In high school, my gym teacher made us run a mile on the treadmill every day. I found it so boring, I sometimes got my parents to write a note excusing me from class. But one day, a substitute teacher had us run through the park instead. It was so much fun, I decided to join the cross-country track team. At first, the coach didn't believe I was serious, but she let me join anyway. Running has helped me relieve stress, feel healthy, and meet new friends.