IN-DEPTH ENGLISH GRAMMAR • MASTER REFERENCE NOTES

Causative Verbs

Active & Passive Structures, Usage Nuances of Make, Have, Get, Let & Help, Exam Traps & Practice

Causative verbs are used when the subject does not perform an action directly, but instead **causes, arranges, forces, persuades, or allows** someone else to do it. The five core causative verbs in English grammar are **Make, Have, Get, Let, and Help**.

1. Master Formula Table (Active vs. Passive)

The verb form that follows a causative verb depends strictly on whether the object is the **Doer (Person)** or the **Receiver (Thing)** of the action.

Verb	Core Meaning	Active Structure (Object = Doer)	Passive Structure (Object = Receiver)
Make	Force / Compel / Cause	`make + person + V1`	`be + made + to + V1`
Have	Assign / Authorize / Arrange	`have + person + V1`	`have + thing + V3`
Get	Convince / Persuade / Arrange	`get + person + to + V1`	`get + thing + V3`
Let	Allow / Permit	`let + person + V1`	`let + thing + be + V3` *(or `be allowed to + V1`)*
Help	Assist	`help + person + V1` *(or `to + V1`)*	`be helped + to + V1`

2. Detailed Rules & Usage Nuances

2.1 MAKE — Force, Compel, or Cause an Emotion

Used when someone has no choice, or when something triggers an involuntary reaction.

- **Active Voice:** Always takes a **bare infinitive (V_1)**—never `to + V1`.
  Correct: The officer **made** the cadets **run** five kilometres. / That movie **made** her **cry**.
  Incorrect: He made me *to wait* outside.
- **Passive Voice (Major Exam Trap):** When *make* is converted into passive voice, it **must** take a **full infinitive (`to + V1`)**.
  Active: The teacher made him **stand** outside. → *Passive:* He was **made to stand** outside.
- **With Adjectives:** *Make* can also be followed by an object + adjective without a second verb (e.g., *The news **made** everyone **happy**.*).

2.2 HAVE — Assign Responsibility or Arrange a Service

Used when you give someone a task, typically through authority or a paid/professional service.

- **Active (`have + person + V1`):** Focuses on *who* does the job.
  Examples: I will **have** my assistant **send** the files. / The captain **had** the mechanic **check** the engine.
- **Passive (`have + thing + V3`):** Focuses on *what* gets done when the doer is unimportant or obvious.
  Examples: I **had** my hair **cut** yesterday. / She **had** her laptop **repaired**.
- **Unpleasant Experiences:** `have + object + V3` is also used when something undesirable happens unexpectedly (e.g., *He **had** his wallet **stolen** on the train.*).

2.3 GET — Persuade, Convince, or Arrange

Slightly more informal than *have* and implies effort, persuasion, or convincing.

- **Active (`get + person + to + V1`):** Unlike *make* and *have*, *get* **always** takes `to + V1` with a person.
  Correct: I **got** my brother **to help** me with the project.
  Incorrect: I got my brother *help* me.
- **Passive (`get + thing + V3`):** Functions identically to `have + thing + V3`, though slightly more conversational.
  Examples: You should **get** your eyes **tested**. / We **got** the house **painted** before Diwali.

2.4 LET — Allow or Permit

Used when granting permission without force.

- **Active (`let + person + V1`):** Always takes a bare infinitive (V_1). Never use *to*.
  Correct: Please **let** me **go**. | **Incorrect:** Please let me *to go*.
- **Passive Voice:** *Let* is rarely used in the `be + let` form. Instead, use `be allowed to + V1` (*He **was allowed to** enter the hall*—not *He was let enter*) or `let + object + be + V3` (*Don't **let** the secret **be revealed***).

2.5 HELP — Assist

- **Active (`help + person + V1 / to + V1`):** Both bare infinitive and full infinitive are grammatically correct. Modern usage prefers the bare infinitive (V_1), while British English accepts both.
  Examples: She **helped** me **carry** the bags. / She **helped** me **to carry** the bags.
- **Passive (`be helped + to + V1`):** In passive voice, `to + V1` is mandatory.
  Example: The elderly man **was helped to cross** the road.

3. Continuous & Advanced Causative Structures

1. **Ongoing Action (`Have / Get + person/thing + V-ing`):** Used when someone causes an action to start and continue.
   Examples: The comedian **had** the entire audience **laughing**. / It took an hour, but I finally **got** the old car **running**.
2. **Other Verbs with Causative Meaning (Force, Cause, Allow, Permit, Enable, Persuade, Compel):** Unlike the core five, all other verbs with causative meaning follow the standard **full infinitive (`to + V1`)** rule in active voice.
   Examples: They **forced** him **to sign** the document. / This pass **enables** you **to enter** the restricted zone.

4. High-Frequency Exam Traps (Quick Checklist)

> **The Doer vs. Receiver Shortcut (For Have & Get)**
>
> Look at the noun immediately after *have* or *get*:
> • **Can the noun perform the action?** → Use **V_1** (for *have*) or **to + V_1** (for *get*). Example: *I had the barber **cut** my hair.* (The barber can cut.)
> • **Does the noun receive the action?** → Use **V_3**. Example: *I had my hair **cut**.* (Hair cannot cut itself.)

- **Active vs. Passive *Make*:** Active takes bare V_1 (*He made me **laugh***), whereas passive requires `to + V1` (*I was made **to laugh***).
- **Never put *to* after *Let*:** Always write *Let him **try*** (never *Let him to try*).
- **Tense changes only on the causative verb:** The second verb (V_1, `to + V1`, or V_3) **never** changes for tense or subject-verb agreement.
  Correct: She **makes** him **work** / She **made** him **work** / She **will make** him **work**.

5. Quick Practice & Answer Key

Choose the correct verb form to complete each sentence:

1. The principal made the students _____ *(apologise / to apologise)* for their behaviour.

2. The students were made _____ *(apologise / to apologise)* for their behaviour.

3. I will get the technician _____ *(fix / to fix / fixed)* the AC tomorrow.

4. I will get the AC _____ *(fix / to fix / fixed)* tomorrow.

5. She had her gardener _____ *(trim / to trim / trimmed)* the hedges.

6. Don't let anyone _____ *(know / to know)* about this plan.

Q. No.	Correct Answer	Grammar Rule Applied
1	**apologise**	Active *make* + person + bare infinitive (V_1).
2	**to apologise**	Passive *be made* always requires full infinitive (`to + V1`).
3	**to fix**	Active *get* + person (doer) + `to + V1` .
4	**fixed**	Passive *get* + thing (receiver) + past participle (V_3).
5	**trim**	Active *have* + person (doer) + bare infinitive (V_1).
6	**know**	Active *let* + person + bare infinitive (V_1); never takes *to*.