

GRAMMAR EXPLANATION

What are passive causative verbs?

We use this structure to talk about having something done by another person/thing. Take a look at the following example:

Peter *had his house repaired* after the tornado last year.

The President *had his speech written* by a very talented group of writers.

In both cases, the person (Peter and the President) arranged for something (repairing a house and writing a speech) to be done by a third person.

What is the sentence structure?

Passive causatives use the following structure:

subject | causative verb | object | past participle

I | had | the car | tuned up.

He | had | his home entertainment system | installed a few days ago.

Our neighbors | will have | their lawn | mowed.

How are causatives used?

Passive causatives almost always use the verb *have*, and *got* to a lesser extent. The sentence structure expresses a service you have done, usually by a third person. Car repairs, haircuts, or the installation of home entertainment systems are some examples. Here are a few more:

I *got my car washed* and waxed at the new service station.

He *will have a deck built* next summer.

Although I hate the dentist, I *have had my teeth cleaned* regularly.

Is there additional information on passive causative sentences?

Yes, there are two more points. *Need* and *want* may be used in passive causative sentences. In some cases, the passive causative verb (had / got) may be dropped altogether.

I *need to have* the car tuned up.

I *need* the car tuned up.

In addition, modal auxiliary verbs may be used with the causative sentence structure. Most often, modals express a suggestion by the speaker, such as: You should have your hair cut.

Skill Builders: Grammar – Causative Verbs (Passive)

Upper-Intermediate

Unlike *need* and *want*, though, the causative verb must always accompany the modal verb.

Look at the following structure and example:

subject | modal auxiliary verb | causative verb | object | past participle

He | should | have | his suits | cleaned.

ACTIVITY

Here are a few sentences to practice using passive causatives.

Write a sentence for each situation using the passive causative sentence structure.

I spilled red wine on my shirt!

I'll have my shirt dry cleaned tomorrow.

1. My car doesn't run so well anymore.

_____ .

2. I have a big job interview and my suit is wrinkled.

_____ .

3. We want to sell our house next year but the front yard looks like a jungle.

_____ .

4. My wisdom teeth have been killing me.

_____ .

5. I've been having trouble seeing clearly at night.

_____ .

6. The toilet is clogged again!

_____ .

7. Someone stole my credit card!

_____ .