Causatives

CEFR C2 · Causation at the limits: typology, semantics, corpus and style

WS1 Directness & the Semantics of Cause · WS2 Corpus, Register & Variation · WS3 Stance, Framing & Style · WS4 Scholarly Analysis & Writing · Answer Key

Worksheet 1: Directness & the Semantics of Cause

Name: _____ Date: _____ Level: C2 (CEFR)

Reference: Analytic Causatives and Directness

English has no productive **morphological** causative (unlike, say, Turkish or Japanese); it uses **analytic** (periphrastic) causatives — *make, have, get, let, cause, force* + complement. A well-known semantic principle links **form to directness**: tighter, more integrated complements (bare infinitive) tend to encode **direct** causation; looser ones (to-infinitive, that-clause) encode **indirect/mediated** causation. Lexical causatives (*kill*) are more direct than periphrastic ones (*cause to die*).

Type	Directness	Example
Lexical causative	most direct	She **felled** the tree.
make + bare inf	direct compulsion	She **made** them **leave**.
have + bare inf	direct, via authority	She **had** them **leave**.
get + to-inf	indirect / mediated	She **got** them **to leave**.
cause + to-inf	indirect, often formal	The fault **caused** the system **to fail**.

Part A – Theoretical Analysis

1. State the **iconicity** principle linking linguistic distance to conceptual distance, and show how *make sb do* (bare inf) vs *get sb to do* (to-inf) instantiates it in the direct/indirect contrast.
2. English prefers periphrastic causatives where some languages use morphology. Discuss one consequence for **directness**: why *cause to die* and *kill* are not interchangeable even though both are "causative".
3. Analyse the causative *have* as intermediate between compulsion and permission: what does *have sb do* presuppose about the causer's authority that *get sb to do* does not?

Score: _____ / 20

Worksheet 2: Corpus, Register & Variation

Name: _____ *Date:* _____ *Level: C2 (CEFR)*

Reference: What Corpora Show

Corpora reveal that the **get**-causative and **get**-passive are markedly more frequent in speech than writing; that **have sb do** (bare infinitive) is largely American, while British English often prefers **get sb to do**; that **cause + to** clusters in academic, scientific and legal registers; and that **make + passive** (*be made to*) survives chiefly in formal or institutional contexts. Register and dialect leave a measurable fingerprint.

Pattern	Corpus tendency
get-causative / get-passive	conversational; informal; rising
have sb do (bare inf)	more American; managerial register
get sb to do	more British; neutral
cause + to-inf	academic, scientific, legal
be made to	formal/institutional writing

Part A – Diagnose Register / Variety

#	Sentence	Register / variety & evidence
1	Prolonged heating causes the polymer to degrade.	
2	I got the landlord to sort it out eventually.	
3	Have the courier bring it up to the office.	
4	Detainees were made to surrender their possessions.	

Part B – Recast Across Registers

Take *We made the vendor fix the bug* and recast it as: (a) a scientific/formal causal statement; (b) British neutral; (c) informal spoken.

1. (a) _____
2. (b) _____
3. (c) _____

Part C – Register-Corpus Map

Place each in its most likely corpus: *caused the reaction to accelerate · got him to knock it off · shall cause the notice to be served · had the intern reformat it · they were made to reapply*

Corpus	Forms
Scientific / academic	
Legal / contractual	

Managerial / AmE	
Institutional / formal	
Informal / spoken	

Score: _____ / 25

Worksheet 3: Stance, Framing & Style

Name: _____ *Date:* _____ *Level: C2 (CEFR)*

Reference: Causatives as a Framing Device

Causative choice is a framing act. It attributes or diffuses **responsibility** (*had the files deleted* hides the deleter), grades **volition** (*let* vs *made*), and can naturalise **power** (the smooth *had it done* of those who command). Combined with nominalization and the passive, causatives build — or dismantle — an impression of agency. The C2 writer wields the whole apparatus and can diagnose it in others' prose.

Device	Framing effect	Example
have sth done	erases the actual agent	The board **had the memo destroyed**.
get sb to do	credits/blames the influencer	Lobbyists **got the bill watered down**.
be made to	frames subject as victim	Whistleblowers **were made to resign**.
cause + nominalization	abstract, agentless causation	The policy **caused widespread hardship**.

Part A – Unpack the Framing

Rewrite each with explicit agents, then name the framing device the original used.

1. Awkward questions were made to disappear. _____
2. The chairman had the minutes amended. _____
3. Their campaign got the regulation repealed. _____

Part B – Stance Calibration

Frame the same event — *a manager ended a project* — three ways: as decisive authority, as yielding to pressure, as coercion of staff.

1. Authority: _____
2. Pressure: _____
3. Coercion: _____

Part C – Pastiche & Diagnosis

Write a short bureaucratic notice (3–4 sentences) that uses causatives and nominalization to diffuse responsibility; then rewrite it to restore full accountability, annotating each change.

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Score: _____ / 30

Worksheet 4: Scholarly Analysis & Writing

Name: _____ Date: _____ Level: C2 (CEFR)

Part A – Critical Text Analysis

> The causative is where grammar meets power. To have a thing done is to command without naming the hand that does it; to get someone to act is to concede that they might have refused; to be made to comply is to be stripped of the pretence of choice. English, lacking a morphological causative, spreads these meanings across a handful of light verbs whose very ordinariness disguises their force. It is precisely because make, have, and get are so unremarkable that they can be made to carry so much — and, one might add, made to conceal so much.

1. Identify every causative (including passives and non-finite forms) and place each on the directness/force cline.
2. "made to carry so much … made to conceal so much" uses the passive causative reflexively. Analyse the irony and how it enacts the passage's thesis.
3. The passage links the absence of a morphological causative to the spreading of meaning across "light verbs". Reconstruct and evaluate this argument.
4. Assess the claim that the ordinariness of make/have/get is what enables their rhetorical power. Draw on the interplay of causative, passive, and agency.

Part B – Extended Scholarly Writing

Write the opening two paragraphs (220–260 words) of a scholarly essay on: "The English analytic causative encodes not merely causation but the causer's relation to power." Requirements — include and underline: (1) one **direct causative** (make/have + bare infinitive); (2) one **indirect/ mediated causative** (get sb to / cause to); (3) one **causative passive** (be made to / have sth done) whose framing you can justify; (4) one precise **metalinguistic term** (analytic/periphrastic causative, iconicity, directness, volition, valency) used correctly; (5) two **epistemic hedges** calibrated to each claim; (6) one **conjunct** that maps the argument's logic precisely.

#	Line
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Features: _____ / 6 Word count: _____ Score: _____ / 35

Answer Key & Teacher Notes

For teacher use only — C2 Level, Causatives

Worksheet 1 – Part A (model)

1 Iconicity (the "distance principle"): greater linguistic distance between causing and caused predicate mirrors greater conceptual distance between cause and effect. The bare-infinitive complement of *make* is maximally integrated (adjacent, no *to*), encoding direct, unmediated causation; the *to*- infinitive of *get* adds structural distance, encoding a more indirect, mediated causation in which the causee's own agency intervenes. · 2 *kill* (lexical) fuses cause and result into one predicate, implying direct causation; *cause to die* separates them, licensing an indirect reading (e.g. a remote or accidental cause). Hence they diverge: one can "cause someone to die" without "killing" them, so the periphrasis is not a stylistic variant but a semantically distinct, less direct causative. · 3 *have sb do* presupposes that the causer has standing/authority such that the causee's compliance is expected and unremarkable (a boss "has" an assistant do X); *get sb to do* presupposes potential resistance and foregrounds the effort/persuasion needed, granting the causee more independent volition.

Worksheet 2 – Part A (model)

1 scientific/academic — inanimate causer + *cause…to*. · 2 informal spoken/BrE — *got… to*, "sort it out", "eventually". · 3 managerial/AmE — *have* + *bare infinitive* imperative. · 4 formal/institutional — *were made to* passive causative.

Worksheet 2 – Part B (model)

(a) We required the vendor to fix the bug / The vendor was required to fix the defect. (b) We got the vendor to fix the bug. (c) We made the vendor sort the bug out.

Worksheet 2 – Part C

Scientific: caused the reaction to accelerate. · Legal: shall cause the notice to be served. · Managerial/AmE: had the intern reformat it. · Institutional/formal: they were made to reapply. · Informal/spoken: got him to knock it off.

Worksheet 3 – Part A (model)

1 "Officials made the awkward questions disappear / suppressed the questions." — framing: passive causative erasing the suppressor. · 2 "The chairman told the secretary to amend the minutes." — framing: have sth done backgrounds the amender, foregrounds the chairman's authority. · 3 "Their campaign persuaded legislators to repeal the regulation." — framing: get sb to credits the campaign's influence.

Worksheet 3 – Part B (model)

Authority: The manager had the project shut down / closed the project down. · Pressure: The manager was got/pushed to end the project (better: gave in to pressure and ended it). · Coercion: The manager made the staff abandon the project / The staff were made to abandon it.

Worksheet 3 – Part C

Assess whether the diffusing version genuinely removes agents (via have sth done + nominalization) and whether the accountable rewrite restores every agent with an explicit subject and active verb. The annotation should name each device (agentless causative, nominalization, passive) and its accountable replacement.

Worksheet 4 – Part A (model)

1 "have a thing done" (arrange/authority — direct via command, agent erased); "get someone to act" (indirect/mediated — concedes volition); "be made to comply" (direct compulsion, passive — victim framing); "can be made to carry", "made to conceal" (passive causatives, reflexive). · 2 The passage describes light verbs being "made to carry/conceal" using the very make-passive it analyses, enacting its claim that ordinary causatives can be loaded with force; the reflexivity is the argument in miniature. · 3 Argument: lacking a morphological causative, English distributes causative meaning across make/have/get/let/cause; because these are high-frequency, semantically light verbs, the causative force is carried covertly. It is sound as description; a critic might note that "light" verbs are not meaningless and that their distinctions (direct/indirect, authority/permission) are quite precise, so the "disguise" is available to attentive readers. · 4 A strong answer agrees ordinariness enables rhetorical power — unremarkable verbs slip past scrutiny while distributing agency and volition — while noting the effect depends on the reader's inattention; the same ordinariness makes the framing recoverable under analysis, so the power is real but not absolute.

Worksheet 4 – Part B: Marking Rubric

Criterion	Descriptor at C2	Marks
Direct causative	make/have + bare inf, correct	0–5
Indirect causative	get sb to / cause to, correct	0–5
Justified causative passive	be made to / have sth done; framing defended	0–5
Metalinguistic accuracy	Term used correctly, no overclaiming	0–5
Epistemic calibration	Two hedges matched to claim strength	0–5
Argument & length	220–260 words; contestable claim developed	0–5

The C2 benchmark is conscious orchestration: a student who selects a direct *make* over a mediated *get … to* and can explain, in a footnote, how iconicity ties the bare infinitive to direct causation has demonstrated mastery.