

# Do, Make, Action Verbs, Have Done



To know when to use **to do** and when to use **to make** appears to be difficult for many Brazilian learners of English. They actually make the problem much bigger than it really is by trying to find out if in English you should use **to do** or **to make** while in most cases you use neither. You use specific action verbs instead.

## Specific action verbs

Instead of trying to find out if it is better to say *to do a letter* or *to make a letter* it is better to use the specific action verb **to write**, *to write a letter*. It is the normal way to say this in English so there is no need to worry about making the correct choice between **to do** and **to make**. *Bob needs to write a letter.*

*Examples of using action verbs:*

- I'm **baking** bread.
- George **bakes** marvellous cakes.
- The author is **writing** a book.
- The cook is **preparing** dinner for twenty people.
- He is **frying** the meat.
- She is **boiling** the potatoes and vegetables.
- Ferrari **builds** luxurious cars.
- Ferrari **produces** luxurious cars.
- They are **building** a house.
- Peter is **trimming** his beard.
- The secretary needs to **write** a letter.

## Make

Normally **to make** is used to talk about producing something.

*Example:*

- Our neighbour **makes** her own dresses.
- Our backdoor is damaged. I asked a carpenter to make a new one.

# Do

The verb **to do** is used especially for talking about achieving a certain result or when an action is related to the self.

*Examples:*

Women often take a long time to **do** their hair and their make-up.

John is **doing** the laundry.

Lilly is **doing** the dishes.

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## Some exceptions:

An important chore at home and task of room service in an hotel is **making** (up) the beds.

The children are **making** a lot of noise.

I'll **make** you an offer you can't refuse.

Every now and then they **made** some extra money with garage sales.

They **make** a living out of organising peoples cupboards.

## Have something done

In English it is normally clear from the way you express yourself if you did something yourself or if you asked someone to do it for you. It is the big difference between **to do something** and **to have something done**. If you say that you **are doing something** it means that you are doing it yourself. If you say that you **are having something done** it means that you asked someone, normally a professional, to do it for you.

*Someone can ask you:*

Why did you come by bus?

*A common answer is:*

That is because my car is broken and I **am having it fixed**.

(This means you have taken your car to acar-service to ask if they can fix it for you.)

*An unusual answer is:*

That is because my car is broken and I **am fixing it**.

(This is unusual because it means you are fixing the car yourself. It is possible but not many people fix their own cars.)

*Another common answer is:*

My car is at the repair service. It broke down yesterday.  
(By saying it like that, it is also clear you are not doing the repair yourself.)

*It is normal to say:*

I'm **having my hair cut**.

*It doesn't make much sense to say:*

~~I am cutting my hair.~~

(After all, It is almost impossible for me to cut my own hair.)

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