

By

A

We use **by** in many expressions to say how we do something. For example, you can:

send something **by post** contact somebody **by phone / by email**
do something **by hand** pay **by credit card / by cheque**

- Can I pay **by credit card**?
- You can contact me **by phone** or **by email**.

But we say **pay cash** or **pay in cash** (*not usually* by cash).

We also say that something happens **by mistake / by accident / by chance**:

- We hadn't arranged to meet. We met **by chance**.

But we say 'do something **on purpose**' (= you mean to do it):

- I didn't do it **on purpose**. It was an accident.

Note that we say **by chance**, **by credit card** etc. (*not* by the chance / by a credit card). In these expressions we use **by + noun** without **the** or **a**.

B

In the same way we use **by ...** to say how somebody travels:

by car / by train / by plane / by boat / by ship / by bus / by bike etc.
by road / by rail / by air / by sea
 Jess usually goes to work **by bus**.

But we say **on foot**:

- Did you come here **by car** or **on foot**?

You cannot use **by** if you say **my car** / **the train** / **a taxi** etc. We say:

by car but in my car (*not* by my car)
by train but on the train (*not* by the train)

We use **in** for cars and taxis:

- They didn't come **in their car**. They came **in a taxi**.

We use **on** for bikes and public transport (buses, trains etc.):

- We travelled **on the 6.45 train**.

C

We say that 'something is done **by** somebody/something' (*passive*):

- Have you ever been bitten **by a dog**?
- The programme was watched **by millions of people**.

Compare **by** and **with**:

- The door must have been opened **with a key**. (*not* by a key)
(= somebody used a key to open it)
- The door must have been opened **by somebody** with a key.

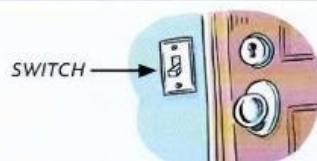
We say 'a play **by** Shakespeare' / 'a painting **by** Rembrandt' / 'a novel **by** Tolstoy' etc.:

- Have you read anything **by** Ernest Hemingway?

D

By also means 'next to / beside':

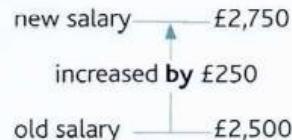
- Come and sit **by me**. (= next to me)
- 'Where's the light switch?' 'By the door.'



E

Note the following use of **by**:

- Clare's salary has just gone up **from £2,500** a month **to £2,750**. So it has increased **by £250 / by ten per cent**.
- Carl and Mike had a race over 200 metres. Carl won **by about three metres**.



Exercises

128.1 Complete the sentences using **by** + the following:

canal chance credit card hand mistake

- 1 We hadn't arranged to meet. We met by chance.
- 2 I didn't intend to take your umbrella. I took it by chance.
- 3 Don't put the sweater in the washing machine. It has to be washed by hand.
- 4 I don't need cash. I can pay the bill by credit card.
- 5 The town is not on the coast, but is connected to the sea by canal.

128.2 Put in **by**, **in** or **on**.

- 1 Jess usually goes to work by bus.
- 2 I saw Jane this morning. She was on the bus.
- 3 How did you get here? Did you come on train?
- 4 I decided not to go in car. I went on my bike instead.
- 5 I didn't feel like walking home, so I came home in a taxi.
- 6 Sorry we're late. We missed the bus, so we had to come on foot.
- 7 How long does it take to cross the Atlantic on ship?

128.3 All these sentences have a mistake. Correct them.

- 1 Did you come here by Kate's car or yours? in Kate's car
- 2 I don't like travelling on bus.
- 3 These photographs were taken by a very good camera.
- 4 I know this music is from Beethoven, but I can't remember what it's called.
- 5 I couldn't pay by cash – I didn't have any money on me.
- 6 We lost the game because of a mistake of one of our players.

128.4 Write three sentences like the examples. Write about a song, a painting, a film, a book etc.

- 1 War and Peace is a book by Tolstoy.
- 2 Romeo and Juliet is a play by Shakespeare.
- 3
- 4
- 5

128.5 Put in **by**, **in**, **on** or **with**.

- 1 Have you ever been bitten by a dog?
- 2 The plane was badly damaged by lightning.
- 3 We managed to put the fire out with a fire extinguisher.
- 4 Who is that man standing by the window?
- 5 These photographs were taken by a friend of mine.
- 6 I don't mind going in car, but I don't want to go in your car.
- 7 There was a small table by the bed with a lamp and a clock on it.

128.6 Complete the sentences using **by**.

- 1 Clare's salary was £2,500 a month. Now it is £2,750.
Her salary has increased by £250.
- 2 My daily newspaper used to cost 80 pence. From today it costs 90.
The price has gone up.
- 3 There was an election. Helen won. She got 25 votes and James got 23.
Helen won.
- 4 I went to Kate's house to see her, but she had gone out five minutes before I arrived.
I missed her.