

# 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.

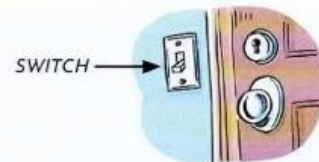
We say 'a play **by Shakespeare**' / 'a painting **by Rembrandt**' / 'a novel **by Tolstoy**' etc.:

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

**D**

**By** also means 'next to / beside':

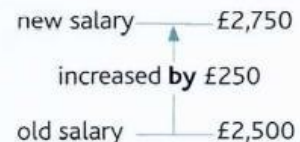
- Come and sit **by me**. (= next to me)
- 'Where's the light switch?' '**By the door**.'



**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

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

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

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

**128.3** All these sentences have a mistake. Correct them.

- Did you come here by Kate's car or yours? in Kate's car
- I don't like travelling on bus. \_\_\_\_\_
- These photographs were taken by a very good camera. \_\_\_\_\_
- I know this music is from Beethoven, but I can't remember what it's called. \_\_\_\_\_
- I couldn't pay by cash – I didn't have any money on me. \_\_\_\_\_
- 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.

- War and Peace is a book by Tolstoy.
- Romeo and Juliet is a play by Shakespeare.
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

**128.6** Complete the sentences using **by**.

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