

A

You can 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 accident** etc. (*not* by the chance / by an accident).

In these expressions we use **by** + *noun* without **the** or **a**.

B

We use **by** ... to say how somebody travels. For example, you can travel:

by car **by train** **by plane** **by boat** **by ship** **by bus** **by bike** etc.

- ☐ Jess usually goes to work **by bus** / **by bike** / **by car**.

We do not use **by** if we 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**, which arrived at 8.30.

Note that we usually say **on foot** (*not usually* by foot):

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

We also use **by** to say how we do other things. For example, you can:

send something **by post** pay **by card** / **by cheque** do something **by hand**

- ☐ Can I pay **by credit card**?

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

C

We say that 'something is done **by** ...' (*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 any poems **by Shakespeare**?
- ☐ 'Who is this painting **by**? Picasso?' 'I have no idea.'

D

By also means 'next to / beside':

- ☐ The light switch is **by the door**.
- ☐ Come and sit **by me**. (= next to me)

LIGHT SWITCH →



E

You can also use **by** ... to show the difference between two things:

- ☐ Clare's salary has increased **by ten per cent**.
(= it's now ten per cent more than before)
- ☐ Carl won the race **by five metres**.
(= he was five metres in front of the other runners)



Exercises

128.1 Complete the sentences. Choose from the box.

- 1 We don't need cash. We can pay by credit card.
- 2 Kate and James keep in touch with one another mainly
- 3 I didn't intend to take your umbrella. I took it
- 4 I think he arrived late He wanted to keep us waiting.
- 5 Some things are planned. Other things happen
- 6 Don't put my sweater in the washing machine. It has to be washed

by mistake
by hand
~~by credit card~~
by chance
by email
on purpose

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

- 1 Jess usually goes to work by bus.
- 2 I saw Jane this morning. She was the bus.
- 3 How did you get here? Did you come train?
- 4 I couldn't find a seat the train. It was full.
- 5 How much will it cost to the airport taxi?
- 6 Did you come here Sarah's car or yours?
- 7 The injured man was taken to hospital ambulance.
- 8 How long does it take to cross the Atlantic ship?
- 9 He doesn't drive much. He goes everywhere bike or foot.

128.3 Complete these sentences about books, paintings etc. Choose from the box.

- 1 I was woken up in the night by a strange noise.
- 2 These pictures were taken
- 3 I hate getting bitten
- 4 'Mona Lisa' is a famous painting
- 5 We lost the game because of a mistake
- 6 The plane was damaged, but landed safely.
- 7 This music is, but I can't remember what it's called.

by mosquitoes
by one of our players
by lightning
by Beethoven
~~by a strange noise~~
by Leonardo da Vinci
by a professional
photographer

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

- 1 Have you ever been bitten by a dog?
- 2 We managed to put the fire out a fire extinguisher.
- 3 Who's that man standing the window?
- 4 Do you travel much bus?
- 5 We travelled my friend's car because it is larger and more comfortable than mine.
- 6 It was only accident that I discovered the error.
- 7 These pictures were taken a very good camera.
- 8 My friends live in a beautiful house the sea.
- 9 There were only a few people the plane. It was almost empty.
- 10 The new railway line will reduce the journey time two hours (from five hours to three).
- 11 There was a small table the bed a lamp and a clock it.

128.5 Complete the sentences using **by**.

- 1 Carl won the race. He was five metres in front of the other runners.
Carl won by five metres.
- 2 Ten years ago the population of the country was 50 million. Now it is 56 million.
In the last ten years the population has
- 3 There was an election. Helen won. She got 25 votes and James got 23.
Helen won
- 4 I went to Kate's office to see her, but she had left work five minutes before I arrived.
I missed