All over the world children are disciplined by their families. Sometimes this discipline consists of spanking or hitting children when they misbehave. In 1997, the United States Court of Appeals ruled that parents do not have a secure right under the U.S. Constitution to corporally punish their children.

Many people are puzzled by those who oppose spanking. They argue that parents have always used spanking as a way to discipline their children, and that spanking is a universal form of punishment. In a 2010 survey of children in 33 countries, half reported having been subjected to corporal punishment by their parents. In the U.S., research indicates that 65% of 19- to 35-month-olds and 85% of teenagers have been slapped or spanked by their parents. Would spanking be so common if it didn’t work?

But some researchers argue that spanking is ineffective in reducing bad behavior. Spanking does not help children to understand why their behavior was wrong. Furthermore, being spanked by a loved one can be frightening. So even if parents explain why a child is being spanked, the pain and fear caused by being hit may interfere with understanding the explanation.

Because of research like this, many children’s rights organizations argue that spanking and other forms of corporal punishment should be outlawed. The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child has declared spanking a “form of violence” and called for banning it. Both the Council of Europe and the Organization of American States have echoed that call. As a result, 33 countries have outlawed corporal punishment. The U.S. is not among them.

Though no one is in favor of violence against children, many think that parents should have the right to decide whether to spank or not. They argue that making spanking illegal would be a violation of parental rights, an invasion of the privacy of the family, and inconsistent with the traditional values of many people living in the U.S.

What do you think? Should spanking be outlawed, or should parents retain the right to use corporal punishment with their own children?
privacy (noun) freedom from the attention of others

Sample Sentence: Some parents believe that having the courts decide what they may do in their own homes interferes with their privacy.

Turn and Talk: Many famous people complain that they have no privacy because of the news media. Do you think celebrities have a right to complain about their lack of privacy?

invasion (noun) unwanted interference

Sample Sentence: Many American elm trees died as a result of Dutch elm disease carried by an invasion of beetles.

Turn and Talk: There is strong disagreement about whether invasion of a foreign country can ever be justified. What do you think?

consist (verb) to be made up of

Sample Sentence: Sometimes discipline may consist of spanking or hitting children when they are behaving badly.

Turn and Talk: Would you prefer it if school consisted only of online projects? Explain.

secure (adjective) safe, certain

Sample Sentence: In 1997, the United States Court of Appeals ruled that parents do not have a secure right under the U.S. Constitution to physically punish their children.

Turn and Talk: What are some ways to create a secure password for your email account?

*secure (verb) to get something

Sample Sentence: After a difficult test and long application, Jamar secured a spot at a competitive high school.

Turn and Talk: How might a person secure tickets to the Olympics?

corporal (adjective) related to the body

Sample Sentence: Some parents claim that corporal punishment by teachers violates children’s rights.

Turn and Talk: Corporal punishment used to be common in homes and schools. Why do you think this has changed?
SHOULD CORPORAL PUNISHMENT BE OUTLAWED?

DO THE MATH

According to a 2002 poll by ABC News, most Americans think that good family discipline can consist of occasional spankings. But while most Americans feel secure in the right to spank their children in the privacy of their own homes, they also tend to disapprove of corporal punishment in school. Is spanking in school an appropriate response to bad behavior?

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<tr>
<th>Spanking Approval Poll</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tr>
<td>Approve of spanking children at home</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>31%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Think spanking should be permitted in school</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>72%</td>
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Option 1: Which of the following statements is true?

A. More people disapprove of spanking at home than approve of spanking in school.
B. Most people disapprove of spanking at home.
C. Most people approve of school spanking.
D. Seven out of ten people approve of spanking in school.

Option 2: What is the maximum percentage of people polled who could both approve of spanking at home and disapprove of spanking in school? Would you expect the actual percentage to be lower or exactly equal to the maximum?

Discussion Question: Why do people change their opinions about corporal punishment depending on where it happens? If people disapprove of corporal punishment in school, does that mean it shouldn’t happen anywhere? Or should families have the right to their own privacy?
Ms. Kahn’s students are discussing corporal approaches to punishment in schools and at home. “Spanking and all physical punishment should be against the law for everyone,” exclaims Viet Ly. “If I have kids when I’m older, I won’t ever spank them. And I definitely don’t think teachers should be able to hit kids.” “I understand Viet Ly’s point,” says Jonah, “but Americans really value their privacy and independence. Parents won’t like being told they can’t raise their own children the way they want to in their own homes. It’s a violation of their rights.” “Maybe they won’t like it, but the law already consists of rules telling people what to do at home and at school,” argues Rashad. “Hitting kids to make them behave better doesn’t even work, does it Ms. Kahn?” “Well, Rashad, there is a lot of research suggesting that corporal punishment may do more harm than good,” said Ms. Kahn. “But doing scientific research on something like corporal punishment is difficult. Can you, Jonah, and Viet Ly get together and brainstorm reasons why?”

Here are some of the ideas Ms. Kahn’s students had about the challenges of doing research on corporal punishment.

**Jonah**

I don’t think people would tell the truth to researchers on this topic. So interviews and surveys might be misleading.

Do you agree with Jonah? Why or why not?

**Rashad**

I think that doing experiments involving hitting children would be wrong and dangerous. So it would be hard to come up with experimental evidence to prove anything.

Do you agree with Rashad? Why or why not?

**Viet Ly**

I think corporal punishment might seem to work in the short term—it might stop children from doing something bad at the moment. But I think it would do harm in the long term. The long-term effects would be hard to measure.

Do you agree with Viet Ly? Why or why not?

If you were a researcher trying to gather information about sensitive issues like corporal punishment, how could you secure honest information and guarantee privacy to your participants?
**DEBATE THE ISSUE**

Pick one of these positions (or create your own).

- **A**
  - All corporal punishment should be outlawed, including that administered by parents.

- **B**
  - Parents and teachers should have the right to spank children for misbehavior.

- **C**
  - Only parents should have the right to spank their children for misbehavior.

- **CREATE YOUR OWN**
  - ____________________
  - ____________________
  - ____________________
  - ____________________
  - ____________________

Jot down a few notes on how to support your position during a discussion or debate.

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Be a strong participant by using phrases like these:

- Can you show me evidence in the text that...
- I believe that...
- You make a good point, but have you considered...
- I agree with you, but...
TAKE A STAND

Support your position with clear reasons and specific examples. Try to use relevant words from the Word Generation list in your response.

privacy | invasion | consist | secure | corporal