



PUNISHMENT

“Capital punishment is as fundamentally wrong as a cure for crime as charity is wrong as a cure for poverty.”

Henry Ford (1863 – 1947), founder of the Ford Motor Company

1. Punishment Discussion

1. Why do we punish people who commit crimes? What is the purpose? What different types of punishment can you think of for criminals?
2. Do you think prison sentences are too short or too long these days? Why?
3. Look at the following list of crimes: stealing a mobile phone from someone's pocket, stealing a mobile phone using violence, stealing from a shop, assault, fraud, bank robbery, murder, corruption. What would be a suitable punishment for each of these crimes?
4. Should all crimes result in a prison sentence? If so, why? If not, which crimes should not result in a prison sentence? Which crimes should result in a life sentence?
5. Should prisoners ever be released early from their sentences? Why or why not?
6. Should children ever be sent to prison? If not, what is an appropriate punishment for a child?
7. What rights should prisoners have, if any?
8. Why do you think the United States has the largest prison population in the world?

2. Punishment Vocabulary

- **to serve time, to be behind bars** (idioms) – *to be in prison, to serve a prison sentence.*
- **to deter** (verb), **deterrent** (noun) – *the use of consequences (or the fear of consequences) to discourage someone from doing something; something that discourages someone from acting.*
- **(to) fine** (verb, noun) – *to charge an amount of money as a punishment; the amount of money charged as a punishment.*
- **three-strikes law** (noun) – *a law in some US states where a criminal who commits three crimes will be given an automatic life sentence.*
- **death penalty / capital punishment** (noun) – *the execution of a criminal as a punishment.*
- **community service** (noun) – *a punishment where a criminal has to provide work for the community.*

Using the vocabulary words above, complete the following sentences (remember to use the correct form of the word, e.g. verb conjugation or plural noun):

1. For smashing a window during the protests, he was sentenced to 200 hours of **community service**, some of which will be spent helping to repair the damage he caused.
2. My uncle is **serving time/behind bars** for armed robbery. He'll be out in three years.
3. Short prison sentences of less than a year are no **deterrent** to criminals.
4. The judge ordered the defendant to pay a **fine** of £1,000.
5. There are people serving life sentences for possession of marijuana or stealing from shops thanks to the **three-strikes law**.
6. There is no proof that the **death penalty** acts as a deterrent to crime.

Punishment vocabulary comprehension questions

1. Should prisoners have access to televisions, books or other forms of entertainment while they are serving time?
2. Do longer prison sentences work as an effective deterrent?
3. When is it better to fine a criminal instead of sending them to jail?
4. Do you agree with the three-strikes law? Do you think this would be an effective deterrent? What are some problems with this?
5. Do you agree with the death penalty for certain crimes? If so, which crimes? Is the death penalty an effective deterrent?
6. Is community service an appropriate punishment? If so, for which crimes?

3. Video: Do Severe Punishments Deter Crime?

You are going to watch a video by Business Insider called "Do The Death Penalty And Longer Prison Sentences Deter Crime?"

Watch the video here: <https://yourenglishpal.com/blog/esl-conversation-lesson-plan-punishment/>

While you watch the video, answer the following questions:

Multiple choice

1. Which criminals did President Trump want to give the death penalty?
a) *drug users* b) *drug addicts* **c) *drug dealers***
2. Which political parties have been tough on crime?
a) *Republicans* b) *Democrats* **c) *both***
3. What effect do more severe punishments have, according to most studies?
a) *no effect* b) *greater deterrence* c) *less deterrence*
4. When did President Clinton sign the three-strikes law?
a) *1993* **b) *1994*** c) *1995*

Sentence completion

5. The drop in violent crime in the US can be mainly attributed to an increase in **employment**, police presence and the age of the population.
6. To understand why more severe punishments don't act as a deterrent, we need to understand how criminals **think**.
7. Criminals don't think about the punishment; criminals think about the probability that they will be **caught**.
8. States that have the death penalty also have higher **murder** rates.

Short answer

9. Politicians look for policies that they can sell to whom? **Their constituencies**
10. People worry that the release of prisoners will result in an increase in what? **Criminal activity**
11. What are many red states trying to reduce? **Their prison populations**
12. Between 1999 and 2012, by how much did New York reduce the number of prisoners in state prisons? **26%**

4. Punishment Conversation Questions

1. Why do people continue to commit crimes when they know what the consequences will be?
2. What should we do with violent criminals who, for whatever reason, are not convicted of their crimes?
3. Should theft always be punished? What about if a person steals to feed their family?
4. Should life mean life?
5. Are rich people and poor people punished differently for similar crimes? If so, why do you think this is?
6. Do you agree with the concept of 'an eye for an eye' as a form of punishment? Why or why not?
7. What is the difference between punishment and revenge?
8. Are there any better alternatives to prison?

5. Punishment Writing Task

Write about your opinion of punishment. Try to use some of the vocabulary you learned earlier in this lesson. In your answer, you could include some of the following topics:

- The purpose of punishing criminals.
- Whether or not severe punishments act as a deterrent.
- Alternatives to prison.

Alternative exam practice question:

Many people argue that longer prison sentences should be used to tackle crime. Do you agree or disagree?