

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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## Capital Punishment

### Passage 1

Capital punishment, also dubbed the "death penalty," is the premeditated and planned taking of a human life by a government in response to a crime committed by that legally convicted person. Crimes that can result in the death penalty are known as *capital crimes* or *capital offences*. The term *capital* originates from the Latin *capitalism*, literally "regarding the head." Hence, capital crimes were originally punished by severing the head from the body.



In the past, capital punishment has been practiced by most societies, although currently only 58 nations actively practice it, with 96 countries having abolished it. It is a matter of active controversy in various countries and states, and positions can vary within a single political ideology or cultural region. In the European Union member states, Article 2 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union prohibits the use of capital punishment.

As of 2010, Amnesty International considered most countries abolitionist, meaning that in most countries the death penalty is not practiced. The UN General Assembly has adopted, in 2007 and 2008, non-binding resolutions calling for a global moratorium on executions, with a view toward eventual abolition worldwide. Although many nations have abolished capital punishment, over 60% of the world's population lives in countries where executions take place. This is because the People's Republic of China, India, the United States of America, and Indonesia, which are the four most populous countries in the world, continue to apply the death penalty (although in India and Indonesia it is used only rarely). Each of these four nations voted against the General Assembly resolutions.

### Passage 2

The United States is one of the few remaining nations in the world that still uses death as the penalty for certain crimes. While many see the penalty as barbaric and against American values, it is clear that it is a very important tool in fighting violent, premeditated murder. The death penalty gives closure to the victim's loved ones, creates a strong crime deterrent, prevents further killings, and relieves the prison overcrowding problem. For these reasons, it should continue as a practice in contemporary society.

To begin, the death penalty brings closure to the victim's loved ones. Losing a loved one to a violent crime is extremely traumatic and takes years, if not decades, to recover from. Some victims' families never recover. Yet one thing that aids in hastening this recovery is to achieve real, palpable closure. Rather than having the criminal spend life in prison (still around to haunt the victim's family), a death sentence brings finality to a horrible chapter in the lives of these family members.

In addition, the death penalty creates a strong deterrent to violent crime. Without some form of negative consequence, criminals have no incentive to check their actions. While jail sentences are an effective deterrent for average criminals, a death sentence offers another form of deterrent for especially heinous crimes. Prosecutors should have the option to use a variety of punishments in order to minimize future crime.

Thirdly, the death penalty prevents further murders by negating the possibility of escape or parole. Nor can the criminal continue to kill within the confines of prison—a tragic, yet all-too-common occurrence.

Finally, the death penalty relieves the prison overcrowding problem. U.S. prisons are currently experiencing a major shortage of funding. This has resulted in a lack of room, food, clothing, guards, etc. If the death penalty is eliminated, it means that even more prisoners must be housed for life. This would only add to the problem of an already overcrowded prison system.

Given these reasons, it is clear that the death penalty should continue to be upheld in contemporary society.

### Passage 3

The United States is one of the few remaining nations in the world that still uses death as the penalty for certain crimes. While many see the death penalty as a viable method of combating violent, premeditated murder, it is clear that the death penalty is an inhumane act that contradicts core American values. The death penalty increases costs, obstructs the court system, is an ineffective deterrent, and does not undo the damage caused by the criminal. It should therefore be abolished from contemporary society.

Firstly, the death penalty is very expensive to maintain. Most people don't realize that carrying out one death sentence costs 2-5 times more than keeping that same criminal in prison for the rest of his or her life. This expense comes as a result of the seemingly endless appeals, additional required procedures, and legal wrangling involved in the judicial process. It's not unusual for a prisoner to be on death row for 15-20 years. The judges, attorneys, court reporters, clerks, and court facilities involved all require a substantial investment by the taxpayers.

Secondly, the death penalty clogs up the court system. The U.S. court system goes to enormous lengths before allowing a death sentence to be carried out. All the necessary appeals, motions, hearings, and briefs monopolize much of the time of judges, attorneys, and other court employees as well as use up courtrooms and facilities. This time and space could be devoted to resolving other matters, since the court system is tremendously backed up. Ending the death penalty is the only way to help move things along.

Moreover, the death penalty is an ineffective deterrent to violent crime. Life in prison is a far more effective deterrent than the death penalty, which, in some cases, actually represents an act of clemency for the criminal. With a death sentence, the suffering is over in an instant. With life in prison, however, the pain goes on for decades. Prisoners are confined to a cage, living in an environment of rape and violence where they are treated as animals.

Lastly, the death penalty does not undo the damage caused by the criminal; it cannot bring the victim back to life. Killing the criminal doesn't change the fact that the victim is gone and will never come back. Hate, revenge, and anger will never cure the emptiness caused by a lost loved one. Forgiveness is the only way to start the healing process, and this can't happen in an individual preoccupied with revenge.

Given these reasons, it is clear that the death penalty should be abolished from contemporary society.