

TRIAL SAMPLE**English Unit 4: Analysing Argument****Outcome 2 – Print text****Instructions**

Students are required to write an analysis of the ways in which argument and language are used to persuade others to share a point(s) of view in a persuasive text.

- Read the background information on this page and then read the material on pages 2, 3 and 4.
- Write an analytical response to the task below.
- For the purposes of this task, the term 'language' refers to written and visual language.

Task

Write an analysis of the ways in which argument and written and visual language are used in the material on pages 2, 3 and 4 to try to persuade others to share the points of view presented.

Background information

Happy Families is an online parenting guidance and support site. It offers advice, expert opinion and parenting resources including print texts, videos, and podcasts.

The site was founded by Dr Justin Coulson, a psychologist who specialises in child development and parenting, and who is the primary contributor to *Happy Families*. Some of the site's material is free to all browsers, other material can only be accessed by paying members of the *Happy Families* website.

On October 25, 2022, *Happy Families* published an opinion piece by Dr Coulson titled 'Why It's Not Ok To Smack Your Kids' in which he explains his attitude to smacking. This article is part of the site's free-to-access material.

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Opinion: Dr Justin Coulson

Why It's Not Ok To Smack Your Kids

Published: 25 Oct 2022



A few weeks ago, my friend, Brett, told me about a problem he was having with his wife. She'd come home from work in a bad mood, dumped all of her stuff on the dining room table, and spent an hour scrolling on her phone instead of helping him with the kids and dinner. He was mad and told her so. And she promised it was a one-off. It wouldn't happen again.

Just a week later, it happened again. This time, he told me, he yelled at her. Then he hit her. It wasn't hard. Just a slap, really. It was with an open palm, but he meant it. After all, he reasoned, she has to learn and talking doesn't seem to make a difference.

Are you appalled? Angry? Does this story cross the line?

It's untrue. Every word of it. But... that doesn't change the way you felt about this scenario right? We rightly resist any justification for hitting a spouse or partner. It is intolerable.

But when it comes to our children, is it a different story?

Epictetus said that "It is impossible for a man to learn what he thinks he already knows."

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There are some who are unwilling to be open to the idea that there could be information out there that they're not aware of – information that could cause them to rethink their position. In fact, a 2020 study showed that parents with positive attitudes toward smacking perceived themselves as being more knowledgeable than someone like me - an expert who has spent decades doing proper science, and who researches, studies, and teaches others about that parenting science.

However, the scientific evidence tells its own story. One parents need to know.

There are warehouses full of studies on this topic. I'm only going to mention a couple, because they really do tell us everything we need to know. The first study to discuss is a meta-analysis conducted by Elizabeth Gershoff from Columbia University. (A meta-analysis is a study that analyses a whole bunch of studies that fit a certain criterion of scientific rigour. Thus, a meta-analysis is a particularly powerful way to understand a large body of research all at once.)

This meta-analysis reviewed 88 studies conducted over a 62-year period, totalling 36,309 participants. In this meta-analysis, smacking's only positive association was that it was shown to create compliance quickly. (Although that doesn't mean children stay compliant, as an experiment shows kids who were smacked were back at another problem behaviour in less than 10 minutes in over 70% of smacking cases.)

Outside of that one questionable "positive", smacking was associated with nothing but negatives. The more a child was hit:

- The lower their moral internalisation of rules (meaning they disobey rules when left alone),
- The more aggressive the child was likely to be
- The greater the risk of delinquent and antisocial behaviour (such as truancy and underage drinking),
- The poorer the quality of relationship between parent and child,
- The worse the child's mental health (specifically depression),
- The more likely it was that the child would be a victim of physical abuse,
- The greater the chances of increased adult aggression,
- The more likely there would be adult criminal and antisocial behaviour,
- The greater the risk of adult mental health challenges, and
- The more increased the risk was that they would be guilty of abusing their own child or spouse.

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More recently the *Australian Child Maltreatment Study* conducted by researchers at the Australian Catholic University has found (in preliminary data) that smacking a child nearly doubles that child's risk of mental health issues (depression and anxiety) compared with those who are not smacked. People aged 16-24 were at significantly greater risk of mental health challenges if they had been smacked as children.

The research evidence is clear – and has been for decades – that smacking brings no advantages but plenty of disadvantages.

However, smacking does not exist in isolation. It is part of a bigger picture - a culture that burns parents out, removes children from environments that are healthy (by placing them in front of screens or building academic pressure rather than having them be active and connect with others), and expects more than is developmentally appropriate. All of these factors reduce our ability, as parents, to be at our best.

Our job as parents is not to add to our children's struggles and challenges. It's to help them manage them well. Smacking fails here. But it's something that, with intention and with practice, we can control. We can do something about it.

Author: Dr Justin Coulson is a psychologist and the founder of the parent advice podcast and website *Happy Families*.

The above text was published on the Happy Families website. It can be accessed at <https://www.happyfamilies.com.au/articles/why-its-not-ok-to-smack-your-kids#:~:text=Smacking%20carries%20with%20it%20the,outcomes%20than%20those%20who%20are.>