



# **THE HONG KONG PARLIAMENTARY DEBATING SOCIETY**

Foundational Debating Skills  
Workshop 2006

*Motion Information*

## Table of Contents

A. Introduction	2
B. Motion 1: This house supports corporal punishment in schools	3
C. Motion 2: THBT television is the root of all evil.	6
D. Motion 3: THBT Hong Kong is ready for full democratic elections right now	9
E. Conclusion	10

## A. Introduction

Having already discussed the work necessary in “treatment of motions” and “how to build a case”, it is now possible to unveil the specific motions that we will be debating in the Stage 1 Workshop:

- **Motion 1: This House supports corporal punishment in schools**
- **Motion 2: This House believes that (THBT) television is the root of all evil**
- **Motion 3: This House believes that (THBT) Hong Kong is ready for full democratic elections right now**

These motions are all extracted, derived or inspired by previous motions used in international debating circles. We specifically chose these motions because we felt that these topics/areas of discussion allow the students a genuine opportunity to provide personal insight and develop sound, rational and unique argumentation.

On the day itself, students will be debating only TWO of these motions.

## **Content of Motions**

The primary worry of many debaters is the absence of information. To ease these potential worries, we provide a basic template of the obvious critical issues that are begging to be spoken about in each of the three above motions. This is by no means an exhaustive list; rather, it is only a starting place to insure solid footing and speaker comfort. Further analysis into the issues, innovative logical links and original perspectives are EXPECTED AND GREATLY APPRECIATED.

## **B. Motion 1: This house supports corporal punishment in schools**

### **1. Affirmative/Proposition Side**

#### *a. Find a working definition within the spirit of the motion*

[i.e Corporal punishment is the infliction of physical pain/injury in order to discipline a wrongdoer]

\*Note: this definition not only includes the physicality of the act, but it also incorporates an assumption about the purpose of the act (“in order to discipline”) and the actor (“wrongdoer”). Debate FAIR means you should not take advantage of the other side, but it also means you do not let the other side take advantage of you.

#### *b. Model*

The model is essentially the mechanism by which “this House” will support corporal punishment and under what conditions corporal punishment is good and will be supported. For instance, the affirmative would do well to explain: When corporal punishment can be used- (i) What are the specific offences? (ii) Are there warnings given? (iii) Centralized punishment or can all individual teachers punish? Depending on the research and statistics the debaters find, they can also suggest corporal punishment for ONLY certain specific scenarios: for instance, if the debaters find that only kids aged 5-8 respond well to corporal punishment, then a better model would only allow corporal punishment for kids aged 5-8. Look at the list of Negative issues: from this list, consider which of the issues you as the Affirmative can put out of the equation through the model without unbalancing the motion and do so.

*c. Issues/Arguments*

*In school*

- Benefit to individual student (wrongdoer): severity of punishment = fear of wrongdoing. Will be less tempted to distraction.
- Benefit to other students and learning environment: for certain students, fear = respect. Respect of authority is necessary for a good learning environment. Commonly, it is one or two kids who are distracting the whole class. Keeping control of these one or two will mean a better environment for everyone.
- Benefit to teacher: the teacher's time will not be spent on coddling or trying to persuade one kid to behave; rather, he/she can spend their time teaching. Less distractions = better focus. If fear = respect for certain kids, at least for those kids the teacher's teaching will be more effective.

*Outside of school*

- Physical hardship builds character

## 2. Negative/Opposition Side

### *a. Model*

The Negative side can offer a “counter-model” or simply try and argue on principle that corporal punishment is bad or ineffective. A counter model has the benefit of being very substantial and obvious and here is a possible alternative:

“This House should not support corporal punishment because other disciplinary measures such as isolation, detention, one-to-one conversations between students and teachers are sufficient in insuring a stable academic learning environment in school WITHOUT all the BAD potentially brought about by corporal punishment”

### *b. Issues/Arguments*

#### *In school*

- Corporal punishment itself is distracting if done openly
- Corporal punishment should not be open to individual teacher discretion. Each teacher has different standards of hitting hard and tolerance of distraction.
- Fear = no participation in class. Students afraid of teacher will not interact with teacher.
- Consent of child in being hit highly questionable. Human rights of the child are engaged.
- School should not reinforce that violence is acceptable

#### *Outside of school*

- *Locus parentis*: the rights of the parent in parenting and disciplining child are superior to the rights of the school as an institution. If the parent does not want the school to hit its children, the school can not.

## C. Motion 2: THBT Television is the root of all evil

### 1. Affirmative/Proposition Side

#### *a. Find a working definition within the spirit of the motion*

Obviously, this motion is not asking “What is a television?”; rather, it is concerned with what are the evils caused by television and how these evils could be root evils. An easy and straightforward definition would be: “When we say Television is the root of all evils, we mean that (i) children spend more time with the television than with their parents and (ii) television allows advertising propaganda, violence, gratuitous sex, questionable morals and values into the living room THEREFORE not only (i) television takes away from quality family time; but also (ii) fills people’s minds with junk that is persuasive and potentially dangerous.

#### *b. Model*

The difference between “this House supports” and “this House believes” creates a different position on how the Affirmative should approach the motion. “This House believes” usually fits a **principle** debate meaning that the Affirmative spends more time explaining why television is bad and what are the bad effects stemming from television corrupting the minds of its viewers rather than how the Affirmative will stop television from being bad and corrupting the minds of its viewers.

*c. Issues/Arguments*

*On television*

- Nature of television programming: By its commercial nature, programs on television compete with one another to get viewing time, therefore it can be expected that television programs will try and outdo one another. This emphasis on entertainment means that television programs will be full of whatever can be sold to the public: be it graphic violence, sexual content etc.
- Nature of television as a medium: television involves fantastic imagery and sound. You can watch it while you eat and you can watch it without having to think. Compared to books or other activities, it is the most convenient and lazy activity available.

*On viewers*

- As an identifiable group, children are impressionable and easily persuaded by what they hear and see.

## 2. Negative/Opposition Side

### *a. Model*

The Negative side can offer a “counter proposal” or argue on principle that television is not bad. By offering a “counter proposal”, the Negative is essentially providing another THING to point fingers at and put blame on. For instance: “Television is not the root of all evils because bad parenting is”.

### *b. Issues/Arguments*

#### *On television*

- Television is just a neutral tool. To offset any negative impacts, parents can spend more time with their kids explaining to them what they see on television, or can even watch television with them such that television can actually facilitate family time.
- There are good programs on television regardless of commercial needs. National Geographic, Discovery Channel, News, RTHK Specials etc.
- Television as a medium is incredibly successful and efficient at distributing long and complicated messages.

#### *On causation*

- Just because people see something bad on television does not mean they will do something bad.

D. Motion 3: THBT Hong Kong is ready for democracy right now

**1. Affirmative/Proposition Side**

*a. Find a working definition within the spirit of the motion*

The phrase “democracy” means many things, so as the Affirmative it is important that they find something tangible that they can measure democracy with. For instance: “when we say democracy, we mean full democratic elections - every HK citizen votes, and the new Chief Executive will be the individual with the most votes”.

*b. Model*

This can be an incredibly technical debate depending on how the Affirmative defines “democracy”. If we use the “full democratic elections” measure of democracy, this is a straightforward **Model** debate meaning that the Affirmative must explain exactly how all the conditions necessary for a full democratic election are present.

*c. Issues/Arguments*

*On the public*

- Cite Hong Kong’s recent public rallies demonstrating (i) the ability of the people to join together; (ii) the desire of the people to voice an opinion
- Cite Hong Kong’s very recent public debates regarding an expressed timetable for full democratic elections

*On the government*

- Discuss the maturity of the pro-democratic party in Hong Kong

## 2. Negative/Opposition Side

### *a. Model*

There are many options given the scope of this motion and again, the Negative can offer a “counter-model” or simply argue on principle that Hong Kong is not ready for democracy. An example of a “counter-model” is: “It is better for Hong Kong to pursue democracy in 2011 than to pursue it right now because Hong Kong cannot outpace democratic progress in China therefore more time should be given to China to move forward first”.

### *b. Issues/Arguments*

#### *On public*

- People in Hong Kong are more concerned with commercial and business success than democratic assurances

#### *On government*

- Politicians in Hong Kong are not accustomed to running for elections; therefore the best candidate for Chief Executive might lose to the best person at running for elections

#### *On Basic Law*

- It is enshrined in the Basic Law that democratic progress in Hong Kong must be comparable to China.

## **E. Conclusion**

These materials are simply a blueprint explaining how to approach the motions and a first-step in getting you there. Each of these issues/arguments should inspire more analysis and more arguments. Pay special attention to the logical links between your ideas because the stronger they are, the harder it is for the opposition to disprove.