

Logical Fallacies

What is a logical fallacy?

A logical fallacy is an error of reasoning which undermines the logic of your argument.

21 Logical Fallacies

Ad Hominem	Attacks the character of a person rather than the claim made. Ex: “The candidate is an ex-felon, and therefore he is not to be trusted.”
Ad Populum	Appeals to popular group loyalties not directly related to the issue at hand. Ex: “Those who oppose owning guns have no loyalty to the U.S.”
Appeals to False Authority	Draws on the authority of widely respected people, institutions, and texts. Ex: Using a professional sports figure to advertise a weight loss product.
Bandwagon Appeals	Urges people to follow the same path everyone else is taking. Ex: “Everyone texts while driving, so it must be okay.”
Circular Reasoning “Begging the Question”	Assumes as true the claim disputed. It is a form of circular argument divorced from reality. It asserts that because something is correct then something closely related is also correct. Ex: “We do it that way because that’s the way we have always done it.”
Dogmatism	Implies that there is no opposing argument. Ex: “Texas is the best state to live in.”
Either-Or Choices	Reduces the options for action to only two choices. Ex: “Either we engage the Taliban in Afghanistan, or we will have to fight them here in America.”
Equivocation	Gives a lie an honest appearance; it is a half-truth. Ex: “People who ride the bus don’t pay taxes.” (Only part true – they don’t pay gas taxes because they don’t drive cars, but they do pay other taxes.)
Faulty Analogy	Is an inaccurate comparison between objects or concepts. Ex: Comparing a devastating earthquake to an economic crisis. Both are damaging, but the comparison breaks down because one is natural and the other is man-made.
Faulty Causality	Is an argument that assumes that because one event or action follows another, the first necessarily caused the second. Ex: “A murder at a rock concert was caused by violent song lyrics.” (The real cause may have been a heated argument unrelated to the concert.)
Guilt by Association	Dismisses or condemns people because of the relationships they have.

	<p>Ex: Just because Tiffany is untrustworthy does not mean that everyone who befriends her is also untrustworthy.</p>
Hasty Generalization	<p>Is an argument that draws inference from insufficient evidence.</p> <p>Ex: “George’s pit bull is dangerous like all pit bulls.”</p>
Moral Equivalence	<p>Argues that serious wrongdoings do not differ in kind from minor offenses.</p> <p>Ex: “People who are caught with even small amounts of marijuana should be sentenced to jail as felons.”</p>
Non Sequitur	<p>Is an argument in which claims, reasons, or warrants fail to connect logically; one point does not follow from another.</p> <p>Ex: “Joan broke her arm in gymnastic practice after school. All after school activities should be banned.”</p>
Red Herring	<p>Uses irrelevance to distract attention from the real issue.</p> <p>Ex: “There’s a lack of textbooks, but our football team needs our support to win the championship.”</p>
Scare Tactics	<p>Uses fear to incite panic and/or prejudice.</p> <p>Ex: “If we don’t close the border with Mexico, illegal immigrants will come across the border and bring in drugs and crime.”</p>
Sentimental Appeals	<p>Excessively uses tender emotions to distract readers from facts.</p> <p>Ex: The Nigerian scams that ask for money to help free up a rich uncle’s bank account in Switzerland or else their family will starve.</p>
Slippery Slope	<p>Exaggerates the consequences of an action, usually to frighten readers.</p> <p>Ex: “Smoking marijuana will lead to other drugs and crime and ultimately to felony convictions.”</p>
Stacking the Deck “Special Pleading”	<p>Is an argument that focuses only on supporting evidence and ignores counterevidence that casts reasonable doubt upon it.</p> <p>Ex: A used-car salesman who points out only the positives in a car and does not mention or acknowledge any of its flaws.</p>
Sweeping Generalization	<p>Applies a claim to all cases when it actually applies to only a few or maybe to none; stereotypes.</p> <p>Ex: “All stock market traders are greedy thieves.”</p>
The Straw Man	<p>Refutes a person’s actual position and substitutes a distorted, exaggerated or misrepresented version of that position.</p> <p>Ex: “Mom said I didn’t clean the floors right. She doesn’t love me.” Just because your mom thinks you did a poor job does not mean that she does not love you.</p>

Referenced: Palo Alto College Writing Center
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