

Thou shalt not commit logical fallacies



Strawman

Creating a false position of an opponent to make it easier to defeat.
Politician A suggests some regulation on immigration from Mars.
Politician B declares that Politician A hates all Martians and that is terrible.

Slippery Slope

The argument that if an event were to happen a dramatic consequence will necessarily result
If we let people eat meat it is only a matter of time before everyone becomes cannibals.



Special Pleading

Claiming a "special" exception to a rule without proof.
All murderers should be killed. I committed murder but I should not be killed because then who would feed the pigeons?

The Gambler's Fallacy

The mistaken belief that a high number of events in the near term helps predict future random events.
Bob had only seen "Heads" result from 10 coin flips. So he bet \$10,000 the next coin toss would result in "Tails"



Black-or-White

To present the false choice of 2 options when others actually exist
I thought you were a good person but you do not vote in every election.

False Cause

Observing 2 events and erroneously assuming that one has caused the other.
I wore my lucky socks and my sports team won their game. I have worn the same socks ever since.



Ad Hominem

An attack against the presenter of an argument instead of the merits of the argument itself.
Jim thinks the merger is a bad idea for our company because it will lower revenue. However, Jim's credit card was declined at lunch therefore he must be wrong.

Loaded question

A question that contains implicit assumptions making it difficult to answer.
Have you stopped beating your wife?
Yes, I have stopped beating my wife -> "I was beating my wife."
No, I haven't stopped beating my wife -> "I am still beating my wife."



Appeal to Popularity

Arguing that a fact is true because many people believe it.
If 80% of people believe that UFOs exist it must be true because so many people cannot be wrong.

Begging the Question

An argument that makes critical assumptions that contains circular reasoning.
Aliens must exist because the alien writings on the pyramids say they do.



Appeal to Authority

Stating an opinion from an authority figure as if it is a fact without evidence.
Bob claims that Elvis is alive because the professor at his university agrees and therefore it must be true.



Appeal to Emotion

Invoking an emotional response to sidestep a legitimate argument.
The new Logic-Diet really works because it makes you feel great and will make you happy when you do it. (So will heroin)

Appeal to Hypocrisy (Tu quoque)

Accuse the accuser. The use of unrelated criticisms to distract from the argument.
You've laid out the merits of vegetarianism. But since you are eating a steak you must be wrong



Burden of Proof

Shifting the burden of proof from the person making the argument to the listener.
You cannot prove that God does NOT exist and therefore he must exist.

No True Scotsman

Making a claim that to hold a position is to not be a "true" member of a given tribe.
Speaker #1: An American would never vote for higher taxes.
Speaker #2: But Americans have voted for higher taxes.
Speaker #1: no TRUE American would vote for higher taxes



The Texas Sharpshooter

The selection of data that supports one's case from a larger body of data which shows no such thing.
The cigarette company points out that there is one village in Asia where people who smoke cigarettes live until 100... therefore cigarettes must be healthy to smoke.

The Fallacy Fallacy

The inaccurate claim that because an argument contains a fallacy it is false.
John says the new board member's arguments are invalid because the board members are from Sweden. That is a fallacy therefore we should vote for the new board



Argument from Incredulity

The argument that because something is difficult to understand so it is not true.
Quantum effects make no sense to me therefore it must not be true.

Ambiguity

The fallacy where the unclear meaning of a word is used to distort meaning.
I told the judge that I should not get a ticket because the sign said "FINE to park here" so I thought it was fine to park there.



Genetic

The fallacy claims that because of the origin of a claim it must be false.
Sure the media claims that Senator X is corrupt, but we all know about the media's credibility

Anecdotal Fallacy

Using personal experience to dismiss evidence or statistics.
Smoking is bad for your health? My Grandfather smokes 2 packs a day and is 98 years old



Middle Ground

The false argument that the position between two extremes is the truth.
Some people say we should allow no immigration, others say we should have open borders. Therefore we should allow half of the people in.

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