

Common Logical Fallacies

Flawed Arguments

Logical Fallacies...

- Flaws in an argument
- Often subtle
- Learning to recognize these will:
 - Strengthen your own arguments
 - Help you critique other's arguments

Hasty Generalization

- A generalization based on insufficient or unrepresented evidence
 - Deaths from drug overdoses in Metropolis have doubled over the last three years. Therefore, more Americans than ever are dying from drug abuse.

Non Sequitur (Does Not Follow)

- A conclusion that does not follow logically from preceding statements or that is based on irrelevant data.
 - Mary loves children, so will make an excellent school teacher.

False Analogy

- The assumption that because two things are alike in some respects, they are alike in others.
 - If we put humans on the moon, we should be able to find a cure for the common cold.

“Either... or” Fallacy

- The suggestion that only two alternatives exist when in fact there are more.
 - Either learn how to program a computer, or you won't be able to get a decent job after college.

False Cause (*Post Hoc*, Coincidence vs. Causality)

- The assumption that because one event follows another, the first is the cause of the second.
 - Since Governor Smith took office, unemployment for minorities in the state has decreased by seven percent. Governor Smith should be applauded for reducing unemployment among minorities.

Circular Reasoning/ Begging the Question (Unsupported Assertion)

- An argument in which the writer, instead of applying evidence simply restates the point in other language.
 - Students should not be allowed to park in lots now reserved for faculty because those lots should be for faculty only.

Bandwagon Appeal (*Ad Populum*)

- A claim that an idea should be accepted because a large number of people favor it or believe it to be true.
 - Everyone knows that smoking marijuana is physically addictive and psychologically harmful.

Argument to the Person (*Ad Hominem*)

- An attack on the person proposing an argument rather than on the argument itself.
 - Senator Jones was a conscientious objector during the Vietnam War, so his proposal to limit military spending has no merit.

Red Herring

- An argument that focuses on an irrelevant issue to detract attention from the real issue.
 - Reporters are out to get the president, so it's no wonder we are hearing rumors about these scandals.

Force and Fear (*Ad Baculum*)

- The *ad baculum* fallacy is committed whenever the proponent of an argument attempts to persuade the audience to accept the conclusion... by predicting (or causing) unpleasant consequences if it is not accepted.
 - You ought to vote for Senator Gulch, because if you don't, I'll burn your house down.

Appeal to Celebrity/ Authority (*Ad Verecundiam*)

- The *ad verecundiam* fallacy consists of an appeal to irrelevant authority, that is, an ‘authority’ who is not an authority in the field of question (or at least one we have no reason to believe to be such an authority).
 - Oprah says that she won’t eat beef, therefore you shouldn’t eat beef.

Pity (Ad Misericordiam)

- *Ad Misericordiam* is an appeal to accept the truth of a conclusion out of pity for the arguer or some third party. Either the arguer (or someone else) is already an object of pity, or they will become one if the conclusion is not accepted.
 - If I don't get at least a B in this course my GPA will drop below 2.0. If that happens I'll lose my scholarship and have to quit school, so I ought to get a B in this course.

Non-Disproof

- One sometimes encounters arguments that some claim should be accepted because they have never been disproved. The move from ‘not disproved’ to ‘proved’ is invalid.
 - No one has ever shown that it is impossible that the stars rule our lives; therefore, astrology is true.



Ad populum

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Circular reasoning



Either/Or

Fallacies Covered:

- Hasty Generalization
- Non Sequitur (Does Not Follow)
- False Analogy
- “Either... or” Fallacy
- False Cause (*Post Hoc*,
Coincidence vs. Causality)
- Circular Reasoning/ Begging the
Question (Unsupported Assertion)
- Bandwagon Appeal (*Ad Populum*)
- Argument to the Person (*Ad
Hominem*)
- Red Herring
- Force and Fear (*Ad Baculum*)
- Appeal to Celebrity/ Authority
(*Ad Verecundiam*)
- Pity (*Ad Misericordiam*)
- Non-Disproof
- Undistributed Middle