

Logical Fallacies Handout

Type	Definition	Example
False Analogy	X has property Y. Z is like X. Z therefore has property Y.	<i>Pens help you write. A drinking straw looks like a pen. Therefore, drinking straws can help you write.</i>
Evading Burden of Proof	The party whose standpoint has been questioned must prove that it is acceptable, but does not do so.	<i>The youth of today are, by nature, lazy.</i>
Simplification	The series of actual causes for an event are either reduced or multiplied to the point where there is no longer a genuine, causal connection between the alleged causes and the actual effect.	<i>School violence has gone up and academic performance has gone down ever since kickball was banned at public schools. Therefore, kickball should be reintroduced, resulting in school improvement.</i>
Non Sequitur	It does not follow.	<i>Steven Johnson grew up in poverty. Therefore, he will make a fine President of the United States.</i>
Either-Or	The claim presents an artificial range of choices.	<i>You're either with us, or you're against us.</i>
Hasty Generalization	The scope of evidence is too small to support the conclusion.	<i>Fred, the Australian, stole my wallet. Thus, all Australians are thieves.</i>
Double Standard	A set of principles permits greater opportunity or liberty to one than to another.	<i>These rules don't apply to me since I am older than you.</i>
Poisoning the Well	Discredit what a person might later claim by presenting unfavorable information about the person.	<i>Before turning the floor over to my opponent, I ask you to remember that those who oppose my plans do not have the best wishes of the university at heart.</i>
False Authority	Use a biased, suspicious, or incredible source to defend a conclusion.	Claim: "Aliens must have landed at Area 51 because the Mayor of Roswell says so." Warrant: Whatever the Mayor says is true.
Loaded Language	A word or phrase is "loaded" when it has a secondary, evaluative meaning in addition to its primary, descriptive meaning.	<i>That beast of a penguin may just carelessly kill its offspring.</i>
Red Herring	Topic A is under discussion. Topic B is introduced under the guise of being relevant to topic A (when topic B is actually not relevant to topic A). Topic A is abandoned.	<i>We admit that this measure is popular. But we also urge you to note that there are so many bond issues on this ballot that the whole thing is getting ridiculous.</i>
Bandwagon Effect	A and B believe, so C need not test belief.	<i>Others tolerate racism. Therefore, it's okay for me to tolerate racism.</i>
Circular Reasoning	The argument relies on a premise that says the same thing as the conclusion.	<i>Active euthanasia is morally acceptable. It is a decent, ethical thing to help another human being escape suffering through death.</i>
Flattery	A person attempts to compliment or flatter another in order to get her to accept the truth of a proposition.	<i>Your history seminar was the best class I had all semester, Professor Smith. I stopped by today in order to discuss my grade.</i>
Slippery Slope	Event X has occurred (or will or might occur). Therefore, event Y will inevitably happen.	<i>We've got to stop them from banning alcohol. Once they start banning one form of beverage, they will never stop. Next thing you know, they will be banning soft drinks too!</i>
Veiled Threat	Threaten an opponent if they don't agree with you.	<i>If you don't believe we need curbside recycling in this city, you could mysteriously disappear.</i>
Ad Hominem	Attack a person's habits, personality, morals, or character.	<i>His argument must be false because he swears and has bad breath.</i>
Faulty Causality	The assumption that because one event follows another, the second necessarily causes the first.	<i>The administration closed the smoking court in our office at the end of last year, and layoffs have decreased this year; therefore, closing the smoking court caused a reduction in layoffs.</i>
Straw Man	A person simply ignores a person's actual position and substitutes a distorted, exaggerated or misrepresented version of that position.	<i>Senator Jones says that we should not fund the attack submarine program. I disagree entirely. I can't understand why he wants to leave us defenseless like that.</i>