

## Informal Fallacies (a list)

### Fallacies of relevance:

**How they work:** *Present premises that are logically irrelevant to the conclusion but which are psychologically persuasive.*

#### Appeal to Force

- Accept my conclusion or I'll hurt you.

#### Appeal to Pity

- Accept my conclusion because things have been very sad for me.

#### Appeal to the People (*bandwagon/vanity/snobbery*)

- Accept this conclusion because everyone else does. (*bandwagon*)
- A person of your intelligence and refinement should accept this conclusion. (*vanity*)
- All the cool people accept this conclusion. (*snobbery*)

#### Argument Against the Person (*abusive/circumstantial/you too*)

- You can't take what he says as a good reason, because he's a rotten liar. (*abusive*)
- You can't take what he says as a good reason, because what he says is influenced by his employer. (*circumstantial*)
- You can't take his argument against smoking serious, because he himself smokes. (*you too*)

#### Accident (stretching a general rule too far)

- Incest, which involves physical contact between close family members, is wrong. So, it's wrong for you to hold your mother's hand.

#### Straw Man

- Person 1: We should reform tax laws./Person 2: No, abolishing taxes will mean that government doesn't have the resources to provide necessary public services.

#### Missing the Point

- I stay up until 3 am every night, and then sleep through my alarm the next morning and end up late for school. Therefore, school should start later.

#### Red Herring

- We should make school lunches healthier. You should support this proposal, since it will help farmers to get better prices for their crops.

### Fallacies of weak induction:

**How they work:** *Draw conclusions that are too strong given the evidence presented by the premises.*

#### Appeal to Unqualified Authority

- Take it from me, an award winning actor: this diet plan works.

### Appeal to Ignorance

- I've never seen anyone tidying up the produce display at the supermarket, so there isn't anyone who tidies it up – it must just stay tidy on its own.

### Hasty Generalization

- The three people I met who were from Michigan spoke fluent Spanish. Thus, most people from Michigan speak fluent Spanish.

### Slippery Slope

- If gay marriage becomes legal, the next thing you know, people will be able to marry 12 wives, or goats. And then, marriage will have no meaning at all.

### Weak Analogy

- Like bananas, banana slugs are yellow, oblong, and easy to slip on. Thus, like bananas, banana slugs are also high in potassium.

### Fallacies of causation:

**How they work:** *Draw mistaken conclusions about the causes of a particular outcome.*

### Post Hoc

- My car worked fine until the day you got into it. Therefore, you must have broken my car.

### Oversimplified Cause

- Why am I an Olympic Decathlon winner? Because I eat my Wheaties.

### False Cause

- The fighter plane malfunctioned and crashed because of gremlins tampering with it.

### Fallacies of presumption:

**How they work:** *Ask you to accept premises that assume too much.*

### Begging the Question (*controversial premise/circular reasoning*)

- A vegetarian diet is the only moral option, since eating meat is murder. (*controversial premise*)
- Anyone who preaches revolution has a vision of the future for the simple reason that if a person has no vision of the future he could not possible preach revolution. (*circular reasoning*)

### Complex Question

- When did you stop beating your wife?

### False Dichotomy

- You either have to marry Captain von Trapp or go back to the convent.

### Suppressed Evidence

- This website is accessible from nearly any computer with internet access. Thus, you'll be able to access this website during your visit to China.

Fallacies of ambiguity:

**How they work:** *Arguments draw faulty conclusions based on premises which are ambiguous due to words with more than one meaning or grammatical constructions that can be interpreted in more than one way.*

Equivocation

- Some angles are obtuse. You can't teach anything to the obtuse. Thus, you can't teach anything to some angles.

Amphiboly

- They said on the news that someone gets mugged every night in this city. That guy must be really tired of being mugged so often.

Fallacies of grammatical analogy:

**How they work:** *Draw a mistaken relationship between parts and wholes.*

Composition

- Sodium and chlorine are deadly poisons. Therefore, table salt (which is made of sodium and chlorine) is a deadly poison.

Division

- The faculty of the university is half male and half female. Therefore, each professor at the university is half male, half female.