

RHETORICAL FALLACIES

EMOTIONAL FALLACIES

An appeal to the listener's or reader's emotions that is unfair and disproportionate.

Scare Tactics:

Try to frighten people into agreeing with the arguer by threatening them or predicting unrealistically dire consequences. *Example: If you don't support the party's tax plan, you and your family will be reduced to poverty.*

Bandwagon Appeals:

Encourage an audience to agree with the writer because everyone else is doing so. *Example: Paris Hilton carries a small dog in her purse, so you should buy a Chihuahua and put it in your Louis Vuitton.*

Slippery Slope Arguments:

Suggest that one thing will lead to another, oftentimes with disastrous results. *Example: If you get a B in high school, you won't get into college, and therefore will never have a meaningful career.*

Either/Or Choices:

Reduce complicated issues to only two possible courses of action. *Example: The patent office can either approve my generator design or say goodbye forever to affordable energy.*

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ETHICAL FALLACIES unreasonably advance the writer's own authority or character.

Using Authority Instead of Evidence:

Occurs when someone offers personal authority as proof. *Example: Trust me – my best friend wouldn't do that.*

Guilt by Association: Calls someone's character into question by examining the character of that person's associates. *Example: Sara's friend Amy robbed a bank; therefore, Sara is a delinquent.*

Dogmatism: Shuts down discussion by asserting that the writer's beliefs are the only acceptable ones. *Example: I'm sorry, but this religion is correct, the others are false, and that's that.*

Moral Equivalence:

Compares minor problems with much more serious crimes (or vice versa). *Example: These mandatory seatbelt laws are fascist.*

Ad Hominem Arguments:

Attack a person's character rather than that person's reasoning. *Example: Why should we think a candidate who recently divorced will keep her campaign promises?*

Straw Man Arguments:

Set up and often dismantle easily refutable arguments in order to misrepresent an opponent's argument to defeat him. *Example: A: We need to regulate access to handguns. B: My opponent believes that we should ignore the rights guaranteed to us as citizens of the United States by the Constitution. Unlike my opponent, I am a firm believer in the Constitution, and a proponent of freedom.*

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LOGICAL FALLACIES depend upon faulty logic.

A Hasty Generalization:

Draws conclusions from scanty evidence. *Example: I wouldn't eat at that restaurant—the only time I ate there, my entree was undercooked.*

Faulty Causality (or Post Hoc) Arguments:

Confuse chronology with causation: one event can occur after another without being caused by it. *Example: After the release of violent video game Annihilator, incidents of school violence tripled—not a coincidence.*

A Non Sequitur (Latin for "It doesn't follow"):

A statement that does not logically relate to what comes before it. An important logical step may be missing in such a claim. *Example: If those protesters really loved their country, they wouldn't question the government.*

Equivocation:

A half-truth, or a statement that is partially correct but that purposefully obscures the entire truth. *Example: "I did not have sexual relations with that woman." – President Bill Clinton*

Begging the Question:

Often called circular reasoning, begging the question occurs when the believability of the evidence depends on the believability of the claim. *Ex. The Bible is the infallible word of God. 2. The Bible says that God exists. 3. Therefore, God exists.*

Faulty Analogy:

An inaccurate, inappropriate, or misleading comparison between two things. *Example: Letting prisoners out on early release is like absolving them of their crimes.*

Stacked Evidence:

Represents only one side of the issue, thus distorting the issue. *Example: Cats are superior to dogs because they are cleaner, cuter, and more independent.*

Oversimplification:

When a writer obscures or denies the complexity of the issues in an argument. *Ex. School violence has gone up and academic performance has gone down ever since the introduction of graphically violent video games; therefore, violent video games should be banned, which will result in improved schools.*