

strawman

Misrepresenting someone's argument to make it easier to attack.

After Will said that we should be nice to kittens because they're fluffy and cute, Bill says that Will is a mean jerk for wanting to be mean to poor defenseless puppies. Everyone loudly boos Will, drowning out his protests that this isn't what he said at all.

slippery slope

Asserting that if we allow A to happen, then Z will consequently happen too, therefore A should not happen.

Colin Closet asserts that if we allow same-sex couples to marry, then the next thing we know we'll be allowing people to marry their parents, their cars and even monkeys.

special pleading

Moving the goalposts to create exceptions when a claim is shown to be false.

Edward Johns claimed to be psychic, but when his 'abilities' were tested under proper scientific conditions, they magically disappeared. Edward explained this saying that one had to have faith in his abilities for them to work.

the gambler's fallacy

Believing that 'runs' occur to statistically independent phenomena such as roulette wheel spins.

Red had come up six times in a row on the roulette wheel, so Jen knew that it was close to certain that black would be next up. Suffering an economic form of natural selection with this thinking, she soon lost all of her savings.

black-or-white

Where two alternative states are presented as the only possibilities, when in fact more possibilities exist.

Whilst rallying support for his plan to fundamentally undermine citizens' rights, the Supreme Leader told the people they were either on his side, or on the side of the enemy.

false cause

Presuming that a real or perceived relationship between things means that one is the cause of the other.

Pointing to a fancy chart, Roger shows how temperatures have been rising over the past few centuries, whilst at the same time the numbers of pirates have been decreasing; thus pirates cool the world and global warming is a hoax.

ad hominem

Attacking your opponent's character or personal traits in an attempt to undermine their argument.

After Sally presents an eloquent and compelling case for a more equitable taxation system, Sam asks the audience whether we should believe anything from a woman who isn't married, was once arrested, and smells a bit weird.

loaded question

Asking a question that has an assumption built into it so that it can't be answered without appearing guilty.

Steve and Tim were both romantically interested in Stefanie. One day, with Stefanie sitting within earshot, Steve asked in an inquisitive tone whether Tim was having any problems with a fungal infection.

bandwagon

Appealing to popularity or the fact that many people do something as an attempted form of validation.

Shamus pointed a finger at Sean and asked him to explain how so many people could believe in leprechauns if they're only a silly old superstition. Sean wondered how so many people could believe in things based on popularity.

begging the question

A circular argument in which the conclusion is included in the premise.

The word of Zorbo the Great is flawless and perfect. We know this because it says so in The Great and Infallible Book of Zorbo's Best and Most Truest Things that are Definitely True and Should Not Ever Be Questioned.



appeal to emotion

Manipulating an emotional response in place of a valid or compelling argument.

Luke didn't want to eat his sheep's brains with chopped liver and brussels sprouts, but his father told him to think about the poor, starving children in a third world country who weren't fortunate enough to have any food at all.

tu quoque

Avoiding having to engage with criticism by turning it back on the accuser - answering criticism with criticism.

The blue candidate accused the red candidate of committing the tu quoque fallacy. The red candidate responded by accusing the blue candidate of the same, after which ensued an hour of back and forth criticism with not much progress.

burden of proof

Saying that the burden of proof lies not with the person making the claim, but with someone else to disprove.

Bertrand declares that a teapot is, at this very moment, in orbit around the Sun between the Earth and Mars, and that because no one can prove him wrong his claim is therefore a valid one.

no true scotsman

Making what could be called an appeal to purity as a way to dismiss relevant criticisms or flaws of an argument.

Angus declares that Scotsmen do not put sugar on their porridge, to which Lachlan points out that he is a Scotsman and puts sugar on his porridge. Furious, like a true Scot, Angus yells that no **true** Scotsman sugars his porridge.

the texas sharpshooter

Cherry-picking data clusters to suit an argument, or finding a pattern to fit a presumption.

The makers of Sugarett Candy Drinks point to research showing that of the five countries where Sugarett drinks sell the most units, three of them are in the top ten healthiest countries on Earth, therefore Sugarett drinks are healthy.

the fallacy fallacy

Presuming that because a claim has been poorly argued, or a fallacy has been made, that it is necessarily wrong.

Recognising that Amanda had committed a fallacy in arguing that we should eat healthy food because a nutritionist said it was popular, Alyse said we should therefore eat bacon double cheeseburgers every day.

personal incredulity

Saying that because one finds something difficult to understand that it's therefore not true.

Kirk drew a picture of a fish and a human and with effusive disdain asked Richard if he really thought we were stupid enough to believe that a fish somehow turned into a human through just, like, random things happening over time.

ambiguity

Using double meanings or ambiguities of language to mislead or misrepresent the truth.

When the judge asked the defendant why he hadn't paid his parking fines, he said that he shouldn't have to pay them because the sign said 'Fine for parking here' and so he naturally presumed that it would be fine to park there.

genetic

Judging something good or bad on the basis of where it comes from, or from whom it comes.

Accused on the 6 o'clock news of corruption and taking bribes, the senator said that we should all be very wary of the things we hear in the media, because we all know how very unreliable the media can be.

middle ground

Saying that a compromise, or middle point, between two extremes is the truth.

Caleb said that vaccinations caused autism in children, but his scientifically well-read friend Holly said that this claim had been debunked and proven false. Their friend Alice offered a compromise that vaccinations cause some autism.

thou shalt not commit logical fallacies

A logical fallacy is a flaw in reasoning. Strong arguments are void of logical fallacies, whilst arguments that are weak tend to use logical fallacies to appear stronger than they are. They're like tricks or illusions of thought, and they're often very sneakily used by politicians, the media, and others to fool people.

Don't be fooled! This poster has been designed to help you identify some of the more common fallacies. If you see someone committing a logical fallacy online, link them to the relevant fallacy to school them in thinkiness e.g. yourfallacyis.com/strawman

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