

K.6 Classify logical fallacies

A strong argument uses valid reasoning and logic in support of a claim. When an argument or claim introduces irrelevant information or misrepresents the issues at hand, it may be committing a **logical fallacy**. Logical fallacies can hurt a writer's credibility and can lead readers to draw false conclusions.

A logical fallacy may **present irrelevant information**:

FALLACY	EXAMPLES
<p>ad hominem (against the man):</p> <p>a personal attack meant to discredit one's opponent.</p>	<p>A mother tells the pediatrician she doesn't trust his judgment because he's never been a mother.</p> <p>“Your argument for eating healthier is wrong because you eat junk food every day”</p> <p>A politician claims his opponent is not a good leader for women because her religious affiliation causes her to be pro-life.</p>
<p>appeal to nature:</p> <p>an argument that assumes the natural choice is always the best choice.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Poison ivy is a plant.2. Plants are natural and good for food.3. Therefore, I can put poison ivy in my salad. <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Over 1,500 species eat their own kind.2. Cannibalism must be natural.3. Therefore, humans should practice cannibalism.
<p>bandwagon fallacy:</p> <p>an argument that assumes the popular choice is always the best choice.</p>	<p>The majority in Congress passed a legal bill forbidding women from voting in elections. Therefore, they must be right.</p> <p>Ian was raised in a Christian home. When Ian goes to college, many of the students do not believe in Jesus and do not attend church. Ian begins to doubt the truth of his faith because of his new friends' lack of faith.</p>

circular reasoning:

an argument that supports a claim with the claim itself.



guilt by association:

an unfair negative association with another person or group that is intended to discredit someone or something.

“I’m not voting for John Smith for president because his brother is a criminal serving time in jail. They must come from a bad family.”

“Mary was born in a Communist country. Therefore, she must support Communists.”

“Judas was a bad apostle. Therefore, all the apostles, bishops, and priests can’t be trusted.”

red herring:

the use of a completely unrelated topic in support of a claim.

A kind of “smoke screen” used to distract.

“Why should we worry so much about pollution in our cities when there are homeless people in our streets?”

“Why be concerned with putting an end to abortion when there are poor, uneducated, and starving children in our country?”

A logical fallacy may **misrepresent the issues at hand**:

FALLACY	EXAMPLES
<p>false causation:</p> <p>the assumption that because two things happened together, one caused the other.</p>	<p>Many pagan cultures also created statues and pictures showing mothers holding children. Therefore, Catholics must have copied pagans when depicting the Blessed Mother holding the child Jesus.</p> <p>It's a full moon outside and everyone's acting hyper. Therefore, full moons must cause a change in behavior.</p>
<p>false dichotomy:</p> <p>an argument that presents only two choices when more options exist.</p> <p>Also called "false dilemma" and "either...or" thinking.</p>	<p>You have to follow either religion or science, not both.</p> <p>You either love Jesus or the saints, not both.</p> <p>You either love football or you're not a real American.</p>
<p>hasty generalization:</p> <p>a very broad claim based on very little evidence.</p>	<p>Kevin's grandparents do not know how to use a computer. Kevin thinks that all older people must not know how to use technology.</p> <p>A driver with a New York license plate cuts you off in traffic. You decide that all New York drivers are terrible drivers.</p> <p>Alissa has class with a football player who is a class clown. He disrupts the class and is failing. Alissa decides all football players are not serious students.</p>
<p>Straw man:</p> <p>a misrepresentation of an opponent's position that makes it easier to argue against</p>	<p>Pamela, the class secretary, says the class should do more service projects. Mark says he can't believe that Pamela doesn't support the annual school dance.</p> <p>Caroline says her friends should not be so rude to the new girl. Jenna says that she cannot believe Caroline is choosing to be better friends with a new girl than the girls who have always known her.</p> <p>You oppose abortion. Therefore, you must be against women.</p>