

LOGICAL FALLACIES

Loose Generalizations—Drawing conclusions about groups of people on the basis of stereotypes.

Example: French people are more romantic than others.

Hasty Generalizations—Arriving at a conclusion without enough evidence.

Example: Asian-American students are better in math than other races.

Circular Reasoning—Restating in different words what has already been stated.

Example: Dieting is hard because it requires consuming few calories.

Single Cause-Effect—Claiming that only one event caused another when there may be no real connection.

Example: When I sat down at the computer, it stopped working, so I must have done something wrong.

Slippery Slope—Assumes a chain of cause-effect relationships with very suspect connections.

Example: Because I failed my exam, my parents were mad, I lost my wallet, my car wouldn't start, and I got fired.

Non Sequitur—The first part of the idea does not relate to the other.

Example: I did well in school because I always wore nice clothes.

Either/Or—Suggesting only two alternatives when the issue may be much more complex.

Example: America—love it or leave it.

False Authority—Draws attention away from the evidence and leans on the popularity of someone who may have little knowledge of the issue or product.

Example: Kathie Lee Gifford, a popular TV celebrity, says that vitamin C will heal you from colds.

Ad Hominem—Attacking the person instead of the ideas.

Example: Don't vote for Jerry Brown; he's a left-wing fanatic, a throwback to the 60s, who meditates and eats health foods.

Bandwagon Thinking—Claiming that most people agree, so it must be right.

Example: I wouldn't have cheated on my income taxes, but everyone else does, so why

shouldn't I.

Stacking the Deck—Giving a slanted view of the issue by focusing only on one side.

Example: I deserve to get an A in the class because I like the teacher, work hard, and attend class.

Appeal to Emotion—Exploiting the audience's feeling in order to get them on your side.

Example: I believe I deserve a scholarship because I am an orphan who grew up in a dysfunctional foster family.

Ignoring the Question—Changing the topic before it is really considered.

Example: The criminal won't say where he was on the night of the crime, but he does remember being teased relentlessly as a child.

Trivial Objection—Can be similar to ad hominem in that it focuses on things unimportant to the issue at hand.

Example: I think Ross Perot would make a terrible president. His ears are huge.