

15 Fallacies Boiled Down For Debating

- 1. Ad Hominem Fallacy** - Ad hominem is Latin for “against the man.” Instead of advancing good sound reasoning, ad hominem replace logical argumentation with attack-language unrelated to the truth of the matter.
Stop attack language.
- 2. Straw Man** - In the straw man fallacy, someone attacks a position the opponent doesn't really hold. This fallacy can be unethical if it's done on purpose, deliberately **mischaracterizing the opponent's position** for the sake of deceiving others.
- 3. Appeal to Ignorance** (argumentum ad ignorantiam) - Any time ignorance is used as a major premise in support of an argument, it's liable to be a fallacious appeal to ignorance. Naturally, we are all ignorant of many things, but it is cheap and manipulative to allow this unfortunate aspect of the human condition to do most of our heavy lifting in an argument.
a fallacious appeal to ignorance.
- 4. False Dilemma/False Dichotomy** - However it may happen, **the false dichotomy fallacy errs by oversimplifying the range of options.**
- 5. Slippery Slope** - The slippery slope fallacy works by moving from a seemingly benign premise or starting point and working through a number of small steps to an improbable extreme.
benign premise through a number of small steps to an improbable extreme.
- 6. Circular Argument** (petitio principii) - “According to my brain, my brain is reliable.” **Well, yes, of course we would think our brains are in fact reliable if our brains are the one's telling us that our brains are reliable.**
- 7. Hasty Generalization** - Hasty generalizations are general statements without sufficient evidence to support them. They are general claims too hastily made, hence they commit some sort of illicit assumption, stereotyping, unwarranted conclusion, overstatement, or exaggeration.
general claims too hastily made
- 8. Red Herring** (ignoratio elenchi) - A “red herring” is a **distraction from the argument typically with some sentiment** that seems to be relevant but isn't really on-topic.

9. **Tu Quoque Fallacy** - The “tu quoque,” Latin for “you too,” is also called the “appeal to hypocrisy” because it **distracts from the argument by pointing out hypocrisy in the opponent.** This tactic doesn’t solve the problem, or prove one’s point, because even hypocrites can tell the truth.
10. **Causal Fallacy** - One causal fallacy is the False Cause or non causa pro causa (“not the-cause for a cause”) fallacy, which is when you conclude about a **cause without enough evidence to do so.**
11. **Fallacy of Sunk Costs** - Sometimes we invest ourselves so thoroughly in a project that we’re **reluctant to ever abandon it, even when it turns out to be fruitless** and futile. It’s natural, and usually not a fallacy to want to carry on with something we find important, not least because of all the resources we’ve put into it.
12. **Appeal to Authority** (argumentum ad verecundiam) - This fallacy happens when we misuse an authority. This misuse of authority can occur in a number of ways. We can cite only authorities—**steering conveniently away from other testable and concrete evidence as if expert opinion is always correct.** Or we can cite irrelevant authorities, poor authorities, or false authorities.
13. **Equivocation (ambiguity)** - Equivocation happens **when a word, phrase, or sentence is used deliberately to confuse, deceive, or mislead** by sounding like it’s saying one thing but actually saying something else.
14. **Appeal to Pity** (argumentum ad misericordiam) - Argumentum ad misericordiam is Latin for “argument to compassion”. Like the ad hominem fallacy above, it is a fallacy of relevance. **Personal attacks, and emotional appeals, aren’t strictly relevant to whether something is true or false. In this case, the fallacy appeals to the compassion and emotional sensitivity of others** when these factors are not strictly relevant to the argument. Appeals to pity often appear as emotional manipulation.
15. **Bandwagon Fallacy** - The bandwagon fallacy assumes something is true (or right, or good) because other people agree with it. A couple different fallacies can be included under this label, since they are often indistinguishable in practice. **The ad populum fallacy (Lat., “to the populous/popularity”) is when something is accepted because it’s popular.** The consensus gentium (Lat., “consensus of the people”) is when something is accepted because the relevant authorities or people all agree on it. And the status appeal fallacy is when something is considered true, right, or good because it has the reputation of lending status, making you look “popular,” “important,” or “successful.”

