LOGICAL FALLACIES
Regis Writing Center

Logical fallacies are errors in reasoning that lack evidence for a conclusion. As part of evaluating an argument, look for logical fallacies, such as the following:

Ad hominem	Attacking someone as a person rather than his or her work or credentials. For example, "This man should not be elected president because he does not belong to a church."
Ad populum	Improperly citing common knowledge or appealing to the prejudice and bias of your audience rather than to the audience's logic . For example, "Everyone knows that he committed the savage crime because of his violent temper."
Bandwagon	Claiming that if the majority believes an idea, then the idea is true. For example, "The amendment must be constitutional because the majority of Coloradans voted for it."
Begging the question	Using the conclusion to prove the premise. For example, "Abortion is immoral because it kills fetuses."
Composition	Assuming that a group has the same attributes of each member. For example, "The players on the Colorado Rockies are good ball players; therefore, the Rockies are a good team."
Division	Assuming that an individual member of a group has the same attributes as the group. For example, "The Colorado Rockies are a good baseball team; therefore, their outfielder is a good player."
Either/or	Presenting only one solution to a multi-faceted problem. For example, "Either the United States fully funds Medicare or the elderly will not receive proper medical treatment."
Emotional appeals	Arousing emotions such as pity, compassion, or fear in order to draw attention away from the real argument. For example, "It doesn't matter that there are too many abandoned pets living in animal shelters; once you look into a dog's eyes and see that he has been starved for food and affection, practical problems disappear."
False analogy	Comparing two things that are not the same. For example, "Laboratory animals don't give their consent to be part of scientific experiments, so no consent should be required of humans either."

Hasty generalization	Assuming that what is true in one instance must always be true. For example, "I once dated a business major who was very boring. I wouldn't ever date a business major again."
Non sequitur	The conclusion does not follow from the evidence presented. For example, "In person, Jerry Seinfeld must be a nice guy because he's always so nice on his television show."
Oversimplification	Stating a simple solution to a complex problem. For example, "Term limits will eliminate graft in Congress."
Post hoc	Assuming that, because one event follows another, the first one causes the second. (The entire Latin phrase is *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*, meaning "After this, therefore because of this.) For example, "After Bush became president, the U.S. economy was ruined."
Red herring/Straw man	Focusing on an irrelevant issue in order to distract attention from the real issue. For example, "When President Nixon was accused of mishandling an $18,000 campaign contribution, he instead talked to the press about the gift of Checkers, a dog, to his daughter."
Significance	Drawing a conclusion from a sample that is too small or not stating the number in the sample. For example, "Crime is down 4 percent" (where? in the United States? in Colorado Springs?), or "Drinking is a big problem on American college campuses according to the fifteen college students who were polled."
Slippery slope	Assuming, without evidence, that one step will lead to a second, less desirable step. For example, "If we allow illegal immigrants to remain in the U.S., our schools will be overwhelmed."
Tradition	Basing an argument on the status quo or long-unchanged history. For example, "McDonald's has always served cheap hamburgers and should not change this approach."