

Logical Fallacies

If you think the title is an oxymoron, read on.

Logic is the theory of deductive and inductive arguments and differentiates sound from flawed reasoning. Logical fallacies are faults in analysis that lead to illogical statements. Logical fallacies tend to occur most often when ideas are being argued: more specifically for us, within papers. Each of the logical fallacies explained indicates ways that arguments can be flawed.

Depending on the source, fallacies bear various names. The most common and most referenced are ad hominess, appeal to antiquity, bifurcation, circular argument, false cause, faulty generalization, loaded words, non sequitur, and red herring.

- Ad homonym: attacking the person instead of the argument
Ex: "Why should I go to church? Everyone there is a phony."
Personal church attendance should not be based on the perceived morals of others.
- Appeal to antiquity: advocating that something must be right because it's been an accepted practice for years.
Ex: "I can't believe that we are only singing two verses of each hymn. We have always sung all of the verses!"
Just because "we've always done it that way" doesn't necessarily mean it needs to continue.
- Bifurcation: suggesting that there are only two solutions when, in fact, there are many
Ex: "If I don't pass this theology course, I won't be a competent pastor."
One course does not make or break anyone. Life will go on.
- Circular Argument: claiming the same idea merely by using different words
Ex: "African-American men have had to deal with a lot of racism because for many years they have been discriminated against."
Racism is a form of discrimination thus forming a circular argument which continues to loop back around to the original premise.
- False Cause: assuming that just because two events are related, one caused the other
Ex: "Church attendance has declined since the invention of television."
It is true that church attendance has declined since the 1950s, but there are probably many reasons, other than the invention of TV.
- Faulty generalization: generalizing from insufficient evidence
Ex: "All seminary professors' heads are in the clouds. The three that I have had so far sure are!"
Three examples is not a large enough sampling for a generalization about thousands of professors.

- **Loaded words:** creating an emotional reaction by using prejudice language
Ex: "The bureaucrats on the church board have decided that we don't need a youth pastor."
The word bureaucratic carries the negative connotation of an organization that is inflexible.
- **Non Sequitur:** stating a conclusion that does not follow from the premise
Ex: "We shouldn't use our minds to study the Bible. After all we already have 2,300 denominations, and even divisions within those denominations."
Critically studying the Bible has nothing to do with the presence of several thousand denominations, nor their factionist natures.
- **Red Herring:** inserting an irrelevant subject to throw the discussion off target
Ex: "You say that the death penalty is not a deterrent to crime. What about the victims of crime? Should their taxes pay to keep the criminal in jail?"
The switch to the victims leads away from the premise that the death penalty is not a deterrent to possible future criminal actions.