

ACTIVITY 7.1: Common Logical Fallacies

A logical fallacy is a faulty argument. There are many different kinds — below are some common ones. This type of argument may sound convincing in the moment, but if you stop and examine it, it does not stand up to the test of logic. This is a tricky form of argument that is very helpful to be able to recognize (and not be persuaded by).

1 AUTHORITATIVE ARGUMENT

Claiming something to be true because an expert said so.

The scientist on TV last night said that chocolate is good for you, so that means we can all eat all the chocolate we want now.

YOUR EXAMPLE:

2 SLIPPERY SLOPE

Believing a small change will lead to a disaster.

If we let students have phones in the classroom, they will never pay attention to the teacher, and won't learn anything at school.

YOUR EXAMPLE:

3 APPEAL TO TRADITION

Claiming something is true since it has always been so.

Fishing is prohibited in my village. This is silly. I fished there all the time growing up. It should still be allowed.

YOUR EXAMPLE:

4 PERSONAL ATTACK

To ignore the arguments of an individual by attacking them personally and not their arguments.

Politician 1: "I will fight for the working class."

Politician 2: "What does he know about the working class? His family has extraordinary wealth and he's never had a job outside politics."

YOUR EXAMPLE:

5 FALSE DILEMMA

Presenting only two solutions to one problem when other options are also available.

Vote for me or live through four more years of higher taxes.

YOUR EXAMPLE:

6 STRAWMAN ARGUMENT

Deliberately misrepresenting someone else's argument to make it easier to attack.

Politician 1: "I think we should spend less on the military."

Politician 2: "My opponent wants to leave the country defenceless. We deserve better."

YOUR EXAMPLE: