**Logical Fallacies or Fallacies in Argumentation**

by Matt Slick

There are different kinds of logical fallacies that people make in presenting their positions.  Below is a list of some of the major fallacies.  It is a good idea to be familiar with them so you can point them out in a discussion, thereby focusing the issues where they belong while exposing error.

It is true that during a debate on an issue, if you simply point out to your "opponent" a logical fallacy that he/she has just made, it generally gives you the upper hand.  But then, merely having the upper hand is not the goal: truth is.  Nevertheless, logical fallacies hide the truth, so pointing them out is very useful.

1. **Ad Hominem - Attacking the individual instead of the argument.**
   1. Example:  You are so stupid your argument couldn't possibly be true.
   2. Example:  I figured that you couldn't possibly get it right, so I ignored your comment.
2. **Appeal to Force - Telling the hearer that something bad will happen to him if he does not accept the argument.**
   1. Example:  If you don't want to get beaten up, you will agree with what I say.
   2. Example:  Convert or die.
3. **Appeal to Pity - Urging the hearer to accept the argument based upon an appeal to emotions, sympathy, etc.**
   1. Example:  You owe me big time because I really stuck my neck out for you.
   2. Example:  Oh come on, I've been sick.  That's why I missed the deadline.
4. **Appeal to the Popular - Urging the hearer to accept a position because a majority of people hold to it. Also called Bandwagon.**
   1. Example:  The majority of people like soda.  Therefore, soda is good.
   2. Example:  Everyone else is doing it.  Why shouldn't you?
5. **Appeal to Tradition - Trying to get someone to accept something because it has been done or believed for a long time.**
   1. Example:  This is the way we've always done it. Therefore, it is the right way.
   2. Example:  The Catholic church's tradition demonstrates that this doctrine is true.
6. **Begging the Question - Assuming the thing to be true that you are trying to prove.  It is circular.**
   1. Example:  God exists because the Bible says so.  The Bible is inspired.  Therefore, we know that God exists.
   2. Example:  I am a good worker because Frank says so.  How can we trust Frank?  Simple:  I will vouch for him.
7. **False Cause and Effect - Assuming that the effect is related to a cause because the events occur together.**
   1. Example:  When the rooster crows, the sun rises.  Therefore, the rooster causes the sun to rise.
   2. Example:  When the fuel light goes on in my car, I soon run out of gas.  Therefore, the fuel light causes my car to run out of gas.
8. **Circular Argument - See Begging the Question**
9. **Fallacy of Division - Assuming that what is true of the whole is true for the parts.**
   1. Example:  That car is blue.  Therefore, its engine is blue.
   2. Example:  Your family is weird.  That means that you are weird too.
10. **Fallacy of Equivocation - Using the same term in an argument in different places but the word has different meanings.**
    1. Example:  A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.  Therefore, a bird is worth more than President Bush.
    2. Example:  Evolution states that one species can change into another.  We see that cars have evolved into different styles.  Therefore, since evolution is a fact in cars, it is true in species.
11. **False Dilemma - Giving two choices when in actuality there could be more choices possible.**
    1. Example:  You either did knock the glass over or you did not.  Which is it? (Someone else could have knocked the glass over)
    2. Example:  Do you still beat your wife?
12. **Genetic Fallacy - Attempting to endorse or disqualify a claim because of the origin or irrelevant history of the claim.**
    1. Example:  The Nazi regime developed the Volkswagen Beetle.  Therefore, you should not buy a VW Beetle because of who started it.
    2. Example:  Frank just got out of jail last year; since it was his idea to start the hardware store, I can't trust him.
13. **Guilt by Association - Rejecting an argument or claim because the person proposing it likes someone whom is disliked by another.**
    1. Example:  Hitler liked dogs.  Therefore dogs are bad.
    2. Example:  Your friend is a thief.  Therefore, I cannot trust you.
14. **Non Sequitur - Comments or information that do not logically follow from a premise or the conclusion.**
    1. Example:  We know why it rained today: because I washed my car.
    2. Example:  I don't care what you say.  We don't need any more bookshelves.  As long as the carpet is clean, we are fine.
15. **Poisoning the Well - Presenting negative information about a person before he/she speaks so as to discredit the person's argument.**
    1. Example:  Frank is pompous, arrogant, and thinks he knows everything.  So, let's hear what Frank has to say about the subject.
    2. Example:  Don't listen to him because he is a loser.
16. **Red Herring - Introducing a topic not related to the subject at hand.**
    1. Example: I know your car isn't working right.  But, if you had gone to the store one day earlier, you'd not be having problems.
    2. Example:  I know I forgot to deposit the check into the bank yesterday.  But, nothing I do pleases you.
17. **Special Pleading (double standard) - Applying a standard to another that is different from a standard applied to oneself.**
    1. Example:  You can't possibly understand menopause because you are a man.
    2. Example:  Those rules don't apply to me since I am older than you.
18. **Straw Man Argument - Producing an argument about a weaker representation of the truth and attacking it.**
    1. Example:  Senator Jones says that we should not fund the attack submarine program. I disagree entirely. I can't understand why he wants to leave us defenseless like that.
    2. Example:  We know that evolution is false because we did not evolve from monkeys.
19. **Category Mistake - Attributing a property to something that could not possibly have that property. Attributing facts of one kind are attributed to another kind.  Attributing to one category that which can only be properly attributed to another.**
    1. Example:  Blue sleeps faster than Wednesday.
    2. Example:  Saying logic is transcendental is like saying cars would exist if matter didn't.

**21. Hasty Generalization - Making assumptions about a whole group or range of cases based on a sample that is inadequate.**

A. Example: “My roommate said her philosophy class was hard, and the one I’m in is hard, too. All philosophy classes must be hard!”

**22. Snob Appeal - When the speaker attempts to tap into the audience’s desire to be exclusive and better than other people**.

A. Example: Choosy mothers choose Jif Peanut Butter

B. Example: Blondes have more fun

**23. Appeal to Fear - When the author attempts to gain compliance through threat of what might happen if they choose not to agree**

A. Example: Go shopping, or the terrorists win

B. We either invade Iran now or they'll bomb us with the nuclear bombs that they don't have!

**24. False Dilemma - When the author tells the audience that there are only two choices, one good and one bad, when there are actually many choices.**

A. Example: You either support our troops or you’re not patriotic.

B. Example:Bill: "Jill and I both support having prayer in public schools."   
Jill: "Hey, I never said that!"   
Bill: "You're not an atheist are you Jill?"

**25. False Analogy – Drawing an analogy that is based upon faulty equations or identifications of terms.**

A. Example: Gas prices have gone up 36% since the Democratic party chose Nancy Pelosi to be Speaker of the House.

B. Example: Kindergarten students did better when given milk and cookies in class than when not; therefore students at this college will do better too if they are given milk and cookies in class.

**26. Loaded Question - loaded question? Question thrown out in argumentation that actually is more than one question blended into one, making it difficult to answer without seeming to confirm part of a charge against you.**

A. Example: Have you stopped plagiarizing your essays yet?