

Avoiding Logical Fallacies (Part 2)

One of the easiest ways to strengthen a paper that presents an argument is to free it from improper logical reasoning. Here's a list of commonly used yet fallacious types of argument to be sure to avoid.*

8. Ad Hominem: This is an argument where a point is made by attacking a person rather than the soundness of the argument that the person is making.

- Student: Hey, Professor Moore, we shouldn't have to read this book by Freud. Everyone knows he used cocaine.
- Socrates' arguments about human excellence are rubbish. What could a man as ugly as he know about human excellence.

9. Appeal to the Populous: This form of argument involves an appeal to the popularity of an idea rather than the construction of a sound argument to support it.

- Everyone says that it's okay to lie as long as you don't get caught.
- Everyone already believes that the defendant killed her husband, and that many people can't be wrong.

10. Appeal to Authority: Students often use the fact that a noted authority made some statement, "X", as evidence for the proof of statement X. However, this is not a sound argument.

- A commercial claims that a specific brand of cereal is the best way to start the day because athlete Michael Jordan says that it is what he eats every day for breakfast.
- A commercial claims that 3 out of 4 dentists would choose this particular brand of toothpaste for their own families to use

11. Appeal to Tradition: Often times, the fact that something has gone on for a long time is presented as evidence that it should go on.

- Everyone in our family has gone to the University of Tennessee, so you need to apply to UT.
- The town has always had a parade on the 4th of July and it has always proceeded through the town square. We cannot have construction this summer because we cannot change the route of the parade.

12. Red Herring: An argument that brings attention a matter irrelevant to the actual topic in order to prove one's point about the topic at hand. This can be used very subtly, especially when distracting the audience with a matter that arouses strong emotion.

- When your mom gets your phone bill and you have gone over the limit, you begin talking to her about how hard your math class is and how well you did on a test today.
- The mother of a young child tells him to go to bed, and he begins to ask questions, say that he is hungry, or say that he needs to go to the bathroom-all to avoid bed and distract mom.

**The examples of this document are not written to offend. Rather, they serve solely as an example of what is often seen in essay writing.*

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Reference: Grand Valley State University (Fred Meijer Center for writing and Michigan Authors)
<https://www.softschools.com/examples/grammar>