



Common Logical Fallacies

When making or interpreting an argument, avoid these common [logical fallacies](#):

Hasty generalization:

An argument based on insufficient evidence, often caused by a sample which is too small or is not representative of the whole population.

Example: Jack was late for his first two meetings with the professor. He must make a habit of being late.

Post hoc ergo propter hoc:

(Literally translated as “after this, therefore because of this.”) An argument that assumes that one event caused another event simply because one event occurred before the other.

Example: Jack left a few hours ago for a job interview, and he came home frustrated and exhausted. The interview must have gone badly.

False dilemma:

An argument that assumes there are only two options or outcomes in a situation, when there are other alternatives.

Example: Jack finished that exam way earlier than everyone else. Either he knew all of the answers or none of them.

Ad hominem:

(Literally translated as “to the man.”) An argument that attacks the person who is making an argument rather than actually opposing the argument.

Example: When Jack suggested to his group project partner that her idea might not be feasible, she ignored his reasoning and accused him of being overly controlling.

Red herring:

A fallacy that diverts a discussion from the main argument by changing the subject or bringing up irrelevant points.

Example: While writing a paper late at night, Jack hit a wall. In order to reach the minimum word count, he included a largely unnecessary summary of historical context, hoping that it would seem relevant.

Slippery slope:

An argument based on the assumption that if one event occurs, a chain of other events will also occur, leading to an extreme (and usually undesirable) conclusion.

Example: If Jack doesn't turn in that paper tomorrow, he will receive a low grade, and then he will do poorly in the class. His GPA will suffer, he won't get into grad school, and he'll never achieve his dreams.

