

Types of Logical Fallacy

Misusing logical appeal in a persuasive setting can hurt the credibility of a claim or person. Below are different types of logical fallacy that can cause one to lose credibility.

Logical Fallacy	Definition	Example
Ad hominem	An attack against an opponent's character instead of against an argument.	Francis Bacon's philosophy should be dismissed since Bacon was removed from his chancellorship for dishonesty.
Begging the question	When the claim is included in the evidence, so nothing is proved.	Since I'm not lying, I must be telling the truth.
Complex cause	A complex event is shown as having only one cause.	We lost the game because Wilson missed the last shot.
Complex question	When two different points are linked together in one statement.	Do you support freedom and the right to bear arms?
Either/or; also called false dilemma	When only two options are given when many choices exist.	Either you're for the Republican plan or you're a socialist and un-American.
Equivocation	Using a same word with two different meanings.	The sign said, "Fine for Parking Here," so since it was fine, I parked here.
False analogy	Comparing two things that are not similar enough to compare.	That political leader is the Jesus Christ of the 20th century.
False authority	When someone who is not an expert gives testimony.	I bought a Harley Davidson because Arnold Schwarzenegger says it's the best motorcycle.
Faulty cause and effect	Lack of connection between two consecutive events.	Because I watched "Friends" last night, I passed my math test.
Hasty generalization	When a claim draws a conclusion based on insufficient evidence.	Women are bad drivers.
Moral equivalence	Comparing something minor to something serious, as if they are equal.	That police officer who gave me a ticket is as bad as Hitler.
Placing blame elsewhere	Avoiding the issues by attacking something else.	You criticize Chinese human rights violations, but what about the homeless in American slums?
Prejudicial language	Loaded or overly emphasized word choice.	Right-wing fanatics and NRA stormtroopers will fight to keep guns firing.
Red herring	When a rebuttal ignores the question asked.	Question: Did the president have an affair? Answer: The president is very busy at the moment with the Middle East peace talks and has no time for silly accusations.
Stacking the deck	Completely leaving out one side of an argument.	There should be no "moment of silence" in schools because it discriminates against certain religions, causes unnecessary controversy and takes away from study time.
Straw man	Attacking an opponent's weaker argument rather than his strongest.	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.
Wrong direction	The cause-and-effect relationship is reversed.	Cancer causes smoking.