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A logical fallacy is a flaw in reasoning or a flawed structure that undermines the validity of an argument. A fallacious argument makes productive conversation impossible. Logical fallacies are often used by politicians and the media to fool people because they have the deceptive appearance of being reasonable despite their exploitation of our emotional, intellectual, and psychological weaknesses. Having the capability to recognize fallacies in argument is one way to reduce the likelihood of such occurrences in your own writing.

Common Logical Fallacies

Ad hominem	Making an overt or subtle attack on a person's character or personal attributes.
Bandwagon	Making the claim that since others are doing something you should do it too.
Begging the question	Assuming the truth of a premise with no other evidence than the premise itself.
False dichotomy	Positing an either/or scenario.
Hasty generalization	Making a general claim based on one or a few incidents.
Post hoc	Arguing that since x and y occurred, x must have caused y.
Slippery slope	Suggesting that a relatively small step will lead to a large scale significant effect or event.
Strawman	Substituting another issue for the issue at hand.

Use the flashcards to help learn the definitions of the logical fallacies.

logical fallacy flashcards



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The first step to avoiding logical fallacies in your own writing is learning how to identify them in

other writing. You can find examples of logical fallacies on the news, on the internet, and on the street. Sometimes these fallacies are egregious and obvious (think about the headlines you see in the tabloids), but other times the logical issues are less obvious.

In the following exercises, consider the fallacies you have learned about in this section. Try to apply those definitions to the following scenarios. Choose the fallacy that most accurately describes what's going on in each statement.

practice

Choose the fallacy that most accurately describes what's going on in each of the following statements.

Because the last words spoken by either the pilot or co-pilot were "Good night, Malaysia Three-Seven-Zero," the pilot fell asleep and accidentally crashed the plane into the ocean. [Select]

A news story that reported that Captain Shah was under investigation was shared widely on social media. He must have been the individual who caused the crash. [Select]

This crash will likely damage the reputation of Malaysia Airlines, which will hurt the tourism industry of Malaysia and ruin their economy. [Select]

Check Answer

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