

# CRITICAL THINKING 2

---

## 01 LESSON OBJECTIVES

- Understand fallacies.
- Learn six kinds of fallacies of relevance.

## 02 OVERVIEW OF FALLACIES

In the last lesson we learned arguments have a claim and at least one premise.

Not all arguments are right. That means the premise does not support the claim. Some arguments sound right even though they contain logical errors.

In these situations, we can say the argument has a fallacy. The premise does not support the claim. Therefore, we should not accept the claim because it has not been proven true or false.

The word *fallacy* comes from Latin and means to deceive.

## 03 FALLACIES OF RELEVANCE

**Relevant** means the premise provides good reasons to believe the claim is true or not true. Sometimes a premise is unrelated to the claim.

That is called *logically irrelevant*.

## 04 REVIEW ARGUMENTS

Read these sentences. Use the simple sentence pattern to articulate the argument (and identify the claim and premise). Does the premise support the claim or is it irrelevant?

1. Carlos recently gave Amy an engagement ring. Therefore, Carlos loves Amy.
2. Thousands of tobacco farm workers will lose their jobs if cigarette taxes are doubled. Therefore, cigarette taxes should not be doubled.
3. Emily is CEO of an international conglomerate. Thus, it's likely that Emily earns more than \$50,000 a year.
4. The last three coin tosses have been heads. So, the next coin toss will probably be tails.
5. You should believe in God. You have everything to gain if God does exist, and little to lose if he doesn't.

## 05 PAIR WORK STUDENT A

Read about three kinds of fallacies.

### 5.1 Ad Hominem (attack the person)

#### EXPLANATION

Reject an argument by attacking the person's character or motives.

Why is it a fallacy?

Character and motives are not proof that an argument is true or not.

#### EXAMPLE

Ms. Jones is a terrible math teacher. She smokes cigarettes and always wears blue jeans.

We shouldn't vote for him. He abandoned his children 20 years ago. How can we vote for a terrible father?

### 5.2 Tu Quoque (you too, you're a hypocrite)

#### EXPLANATION

Reject an idea because a person says one thing and does something different.

Why is it a fallacy?

The truth of an argument does not depend on the speaker's actions.

#### EXAMPLE

A: It's wrong to eat dogs.

B: How can you say that? You're wearing a leather jacket and you ate a roast beef sandwich for lunch! Clearly you don't care about animals.

My neighbor complained because I washed my car during the drought. But I can't take him seriously. Last week I saw him washing the sidewalk.

### 5.3 Bandwagon (everybody's doing it)

#### EXPLANATION

The argument is right because it is popular.

Why is it a fallacy?

Popular does not mean true or right.

#### EXAMPLE

All the really cool kids at the high school smoke cigarettes. Therefore, you should try it.

You're going to a study room on a Saturday night? Don't be such a geek.

## 06 PAIR WORK STUDENT B

Read about three kinds of fallacies.

### 6.1 Straw Man (exaggeration)

EXPLANATION	EXAMPLE
<p>Reject an argument by exaggerating or distorting the person's original idea.</p> <p>Why is it a fallacy?</p> <p>It attacks a changed version of an argument, not the original idea.</p>	<p>Vegetarians say animals have feelings. That's crazy. Does a cow laugh when it watches TV? No. That's why the vegetarian argument is foolish.</p> <p>At the Board of Education, Mrs. Lee voted against the budget which includes money for teacher training. Clearly she does not care about the quality of our students' education.</p>

### 6.2 Red Herring (irrelevant)

EXPLANATION	EXAMPLE
<p>An unrelated topic takes attention away from the argument.</p> <p>Why is it a fallacy?</p> <p>Changing the topic does not tell us if the first argument is true or not.</p>	<p>Outback is a great restaurant. Look at how shiny clean the kitchen is!</p> <p>Many people criticize Thomas Jefferson for owning slaves. I think that is wrong. He was one of the greatest presidents of the US.</p>

### 6.3 Beg the Question (the premise is the claim)

EXPLANATION	EXAMPLE
<p>The premise is the same as the claim. A circular argument.</p> <p>Why is it a fallacy?</p> <p>A claim can't be the premise of an argument.</p>	<p>Mrs. Black is a terrible teacher because she doesn't teach well.</p> <p>Bungee jumping is dangerous because it is unsafe.</p>

## 07 PRACTICE

Read these arguments. Identify the fallacy in each argument.

- 1 The new Volkswagon Beetle is the coolest car. It's really popular with university students. You should ask your parents to buy you one. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 Jason: Did you hear Andrew's class presentation about why drinking cow's milk is bad for people?  
Kyle: Yeah, but I don't accept his argument. He comes from a rich family and he likes to hear himself talk. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 Bill Baxter should to be promoted to vice president. He has three small children, and last week the doctor said his wife has breast cancer. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 The principal said children should be allowed to participate in a voluntary moment of silence each day at school. But it's wrong to allow teachers to brainwash children with religious ideas. The principal's argument must be rejected. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 My driving instructor told me it's dangerous to drive without a seat belt. But why should I listen to him? Last week I saw him driving without a seat belt. \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 Jesse Jackson said last week's police shooting of a poor black man was a racist act. Don't believe him. That's exactly what you would expect Jackson to say. After all, he's black. \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 Why is Harvard University so popular? Because every student wants to go there. \_\_\_\_\_
- 8 This painting is no good because it is obviously worthless. \_\_\_\_\_

## 08 MORE PRACTICE

Watch and listen to these short video clips. Write the claim and premises. What logical fallacies are used? Write a simplified sentence to describe the premises and claims.

**V1. Seven TV Ad**

**V2. Subway**

**V3. T-Mobile Phone**

**V4. State Farm**

## 09 STUDENT A - EVEN MORE PRACTICE

Read these arguments to your partner. Your partner must:

1. Summarize the argument using the simple sentence pattern.
2. Identify the fallacy, if there is one.

Do you agree with your partner's answers?

- 1 Of course my daughter can get a tattoo. Body art is very popular these days.

---

- 2 Japanese factories use foreign workers who are paid low wages. Therefore, I think it is fine if Korean companies do the same thing.

---

- 3 My child is smart because she is so intelligent.

---

- 4 University Dean talking to a student: Mr. Smith, you've been caught twice breaking the school's alcoholic beverage policy. If you commit a third violation, I'll have to suspend you from school.

---

## 10 CHECK LIST

1. Define fallacy.
2. What does it mean to say that an argument begs the question?
3. What mistake does a speaker make when committing the straw man fallacy?
4. What is the error when someone commits the red herring fallacy?

## 09 STUDENT B - EVEN MORE PRACTICE

Read these arguments to your partner. Your partner must:

1. Summarize the argument using the simple sentence pattern.
2. Identify the fallacy, if there is one.

Do you agree with your partner's answers?

- 1 William Shakespeare could not have written all the plays. He was a bad actor who spent most of his time drinking.
- 

- 2 You say that we should increase our military force in Afghanistan. Clearly you don't care about Americans. If you did, you wouldn't want them to die overseas.
- 

- 3 Don't use Frank's Landscaping Service. They do terrible work. The last time they trimmed my trees, they killed five of them.
- 

- 4 Peter argues that the treatment of chickens in factory farms is inhumane. But Pete is just wrong. Chicken is a great source of protein, and is healthier than beef or pork.
- 

## 10 CHECK LIST

1. Define fallacy.
2. What does it mean to say that an argument begs the question?
3. What mistake does an arguer make when committing the straw man fallacy?
4. What is the error when someone commits the red herring fallacy?