

# A Field Guide to Bad Arguments

63 ways an argument goes wrong, and what to do about each one. Paste any short link into a discussion.

## LOGICAL FALLACIES 28

### Ad Hominem

Attacking the person making an argument instead of the argument itself.

[fallacy.is/ad-hominem](#) or /ah

### Anecdotal Evidence

Drawing a general conclusion from a single story or personal experience.

[fallacy.is/anecdotal](#) or /anec

### Appeal to Authority

Using a person's status as proof of a claim, instead of the evidence behind the claim.

[fallacy.is/appeal-to-authority](#) or /aa

### Appeal to Emotion

Substituting an emotional reaction for an argument about the facts.

[fallacy.is/appeal-to-emotion](#) or /ae

### Appeal to Ignorance

Treating the absence of evidence against a claim as evidence for it, or vice versa.

[fallacy.is/appeal-to-ignorance](#) or /ai

### Appeal to Nature

Treating "natural" as evidence that something is good or safe, and "unnatural" as evidence that it is harmful.

[fallacy.is/appeal-to-nature](#) or /atn

### Appeal to Tradition

Treating the age of a practice as the justification for it, rather than as one weak piece of evidence.

[fallacy.is/appeal-to-tradition](#) or /att

### Bandwagon

Treating how many people believe a claim as evidence that the claim is true.

[fallacy.is/bandwagon](#) or /bw

### Broken Window Fallacy

Counting the visible benefits of an event while ignoring what the same resources would otherwise have done.

[fallacy.is/broken-window](#) or /bwf

### Cherry Picking

Presenting only the evidence that supports your case and ignoring the rest.

[fallacy.is/cherry-picking](#) or /cherry picking

### Circular Reasoning

Supporting a claim with the claim itself, dressed up in different words.

[fallacy.is/circular-reasoning](#) or /cr

### Equivocation

Using a word in two different senses within the same argument, as if they were the same.

[fallacy.is/equivocation](#) or /equiv

### Fallacy Fallacy

Concluding that a claim is false because the argument offered for it was flawed.

[fallacy.is/fallacy-fallacy](#) or /ff

### False Cause

Concluding that one thing caused another based on correlation or sequence alone.

[fallacy.is/false-cause](#) or /fc

### False Dichotomy

Framing a choice as two options when more exist.

[fallacy.is/false-dichotomy](#) or /fd

### False Equivalence

Treating two things as equivalent when they differ in ways that matter to the argument.

[fallacy.is/false-equivalence](#) or /fe

### Genetic Fallacy

Judging a claim by its source, origin, or history instead of its content.

[fallacy.is/genetic-fallacy](#) or /gf

### Hasty Generalization

Drawing a broad conclusion from a sample too small or unrepresentative to support it.

[fallacy.is/hasty-generalization](#) or /hg

### Loaded Question

Asking a question that smuggles in an unproven assumption the answerer can't address without conceding it.

[fallacy.is/loaded-question](#) or /lq

### Middle Ground

Assuming the truth must lie halfway between two positions, simply because those are the two positions on offer.

[fallacy.is/middle-ground](#) or /mg

### Nirvana Fallacy

Rejecting a workable option because it falls short of a perfect one that is not actually available.

[fallacy.is/nirvana-fallacy](#) or /nf

### No True Scotsman

Redefining a category on the fly to exclude counterexamples, protecting a claim about the category.

[fallacy.is/no-true-scotsman](#) or /ntsm

### Post Hoc

Assuming that because one thing followed another, the first caused the second.

[fallacy.is/post-hoc](#) or /ph

### Red Herring

Introducing an irrelevant topic to distract from the actual argument.

[fallacy.is/red-herring](#) or /rh

### Slippery Slope

Claiming a small step will inevitably cause a chain of extreme consequences, without showing why.

[fallacy.is/slippery-slope](#) or /ss

### Special Pleading

Applying a standard generally, then inventing an exception for your own case with no principled reason behind it.

[fallacy.is/special-pleading](#) or /spl

### Straw Man

Replacing someone's argument with a weaker version, then knocking down the weaker version.

[fallacy.is/straw-man](#) or /strawman

### Tu Quoque

Dismissing a critique by pointing out that the critic is guilty of the same thing.

[fallacy.is/tu-quoque](#) or /tq

## COGNITIVE BIASES 9

### Anchoring

Letting an initial number or reference point pull later judgments toward it, even when that starting point is arbitrary.

[fallacy.is/anchoring](#) or /anchor

### Availability Heuristic

Judging how likely something is by how easily examples come to mind.

[fallacy.is/availability-heuristic](#) or /availability

### Confirmation Bias

The tendency to notice, remember, and trust evidence that supports what you already believe.

[fallacy.is/confirmation-bias](#) or /cb

### Dunning-Kruger Effect

A pattern where people with limited competence in a domain tend to overestimate their ability in that domain.

[fallacy.is/dunning-kruger](#) or /dk

### Fundamental Attribution Error

Explaining other people's behaviour by their character while explaining your own by circumstances.

[fallacy.is/fundamental-attribution-error](#) or /fae

### Gambler's Fallacy

Believing that past random outcomes change the odds of future independent ones.

[fallacy.is/gamblers-fallacy](#) or /gambler

### Hindsight Bias

Once an outcome is known, it feels like it was predictable all along, and earlier uncertainty gets remembered as confidence.

[fallacy.is/hindsight-bias](#) or /hb

### Sunk Cost Fallacy

Continuing a course of action because of what has already been spent on it, rather than what it still offers.

[fallacy.is/sunk-cost-fallacy](#) or /sc

### Survivorship Bias

Drawing conclusions from the things that made it through while ignoring the ones that didn't.

[fallacy.is/survivorship-bias](#) or /sb

## RHETORICAL DEVICES 9

### Dog Whistle

Coded language that carries an extra meaning for a target subgroup while sounding innocuous to everyone else.

[fallacy.is/dog-whistle](#) or /dw

### Euphemism

Softened language that obscures what is actually being described.

[fallacy.is/euphemism](#) or /euph

### False Balance

Presenting two positions as evenly supported when the evidence behind them is not.

[fallacy.is/false-balance](#) or /fb

### FUD

Seeding vague fear about an alternative instead of making the case for your own option.

[fallacy.is/fud](#) or /fear-uncertainty-doubt

### Gaslighting

A sustained pattern of denial aimed at making someone distrust their own memory of events.

[fallacy.is/gaslighting](#) or /gaslight

### Loaded Language

Word choice that delivers a verdict before any argument has been made.

[fallacy.is/loaded-language](#) or /ll

### Thought-Terminating Cliché

A stock phrase deployed to close a question rather than answer it.

[fallacy.is/thought-terminating-cliche](#) or /ttc

### Weasel Words

Vague attributions that imply a claim while leaving the speaker free to deny having made one.

[fallacy.is/weasel-words](#) or /weasel

### Whataboutism

Deflecting a criticism by raising a different criticism of the critic or their side.

[fallacy.is/whataboutism](#) or /wa

## DEBATE TACTICS 7

### DARVO

Answering an accusation by denying it, attacking the accuser, and recasting yourself as the real victim.

[fallacy.is/darvo](#) or /dv

### Gish Gallop

Burying an opponent in a flood of claims, too many and too fast to refute in real time.

[fallacy.is/gish-gallop](#) or /gg

### Kafkatrap

An argument built so that denying the accusation counts as proof of the accusation.

[fallacy.is/kafkatrap](#) or /kt

### Motte and Bailey

Defending a bold claim by retreating to a weaker, related claim when challenged, then returning to the bold claim later.

[fallacy.is/motte-and-bailey](#) or /mb

### Moving the Goalposts

Dismissing evidence that meets your demand, then demanding new, harder evidence.

[fallacy.is/moving-the-goalposts](#) or /mtg

### Sealioning

Hounding someone with relentless, polite requests for evidence to exhaust them rather than to understand.

[fallacy.is/sealioning](#) or /sealion

### Shifting the Burden of Proof

Demanding your opponent disprove your claim instead of supporting it yourself.

[fallacy.is/shifting-the-burden](#) or /burden-of-proof

## STATISTICAL FALLACIES 10

### Base Rate Fallacy

Reading a test result or a piece of evidence without accounting for how common the thing being tested for actually is.

[fallacy.is/base-rate-fallacy](#) or /brf

### Berkson's Paradox

A filter that selects on two traits at once makes those traits look negatively related inside the selected group.

[fallacy.is/berksons-paradox](#) or /bp

### Correlation Is Not Causation

Treating a statistical association as evidence of cause without ruling out confounders, reverse causation, selection, or chance.

[fallacy.is/correlation-not-causation](#) or /cnc

### Ecological Fallacy

Concluding something about an individual from a statistic that describes the group they belong to.

[fallacy.is/ecological-fallacy](#) or /ef

### Misleading Average

Reporting a mean that hides a skewed distribution, so the average ends up describing almost nobody in the data.

[fallacy.is/misleading-average](#) or /ma

### P-Hacking

Running analyses until one crosses the significance threshold, then reporting that one as though it were the only test.

[fallacy.is/p-hacking](#) or /phack

### Regression to the Mean

Extreme results tend to be followed by ordinary ones for purely statistical reasons, and that drift gets mistaken for an effect.

[fallacy.is/regression-to-the-mean](#) or /rtm

### Simpson's Paradox

A pattern that holds in every subgroup can reverse once the subgroups are pooled, so the combined number tells the opposite story.

[fallacy.is/simpsons-paradox](#) or /sp

### Small Sample Size

Small groups produce more extreme results by chance alone, so they crowd both the top and the bottom of any ranking.

[fallacy.is/small-sample](#) or /ss2

### Texas Sharpshooter

Finding a pattern in the data first, then presenting it as the thing you set out to test.

[fallacy.is/texas-sharpshooter](#) or /tss