

Fallacies of Argumentation

Red Herring (Dodging the issue)

A red herring is the use of an irrelevant issue to distract the reader.

"No, I did not take out the trash, but why can't my sister do it?"

Begging the Question (Arguing in a circle... Circular Logic)

Ex: "All kids should own a computer because we live in a computer age."

*We **do** live in the information age; however, the above statement hardly proves why ownership is necessary. Kids can still participate in the computer age without owning a computer.*

Ex: "His solution will not work because it is unworkable"

This example does not explain why his solution is or is not workable. This sort of argument lacks specific reasoning.

Faulty Cause and Effect:

Ex: "There were fewer accidents in the 1950s because people drove larger cars."

This reason disregards other factors: fewer cars on the road, fewer distractions, cars did not travel as fast, etc. The claim omits important factors in total number of accidents.

EX: "Whenever the sun rises the rooster crows. Therefore, the sun rises because the rooster crows. "

Ad Hominem (Personal Attack) :

Distracts the reader from the issue by attacking (name-calling) the people involved in the issue instead of discussing the issue itself.

Ex: "He's never been to college. He's uneducated and idiotic. Why would you trust his opinion?"

Instead of arguing fairly and logically, the speaker/writer ignores the issue and attacks the person. This is a form of red herring argument.