

Section 1A

Recognizing Fallacies

- **Logic** – the study of the methods and principles of reasoning
- **Argument** – reasoned or thoughtful processes.
 - Arguments use **premises**, a set of facts or assumptions, to support a **conclusion**.
- **Fallacy** – a deceptive argument
 - the conclusion is not well supported by the premises

Common Fallacies

1. **Appeal to Popularity** – the fact that large numbers of people believe or act some way is used inappropriately as evidence that the belief or action is correct
2. **False Cause** – the fact that one event came before another is incorrectly taken as evidence that the first event *caused* the second event
3. **Appeal to Ignorance** – uses ignorance (lack of knowledge) about the truth of a proposition to conclude the opposite

Common Fallacies

4. **Hasty Generalization** – a conclusion is drawn from an inadequate number of cases or cases that have not been sufficiently analyzed
5. **Limited Choice** – artificially precludes choices that ought to be considered
6. **Appeal to Emotion** – attempts to evoke an emotional response as a tool of persuasion; can appeal to positive or negative emotions
7. **Personal Attack** – attacks an individual or a group instead of considering the actual issue

Common Fallacies

8. **Circular Reasoning** – the premise and conclusion both say essentially the same thing
9. **Diversion (Red Herring)** – attempts to divert attention from the real issue by focusing on another issue
10. **Straw Man** – any argument based on a distortion of someone's words or beliefs

For the following examples,

(a) identify the premise(s) and conclusion of the argument;

(b) describe how the stated fallacy occurs in the argument;

Example 1: (False Cause) Tax cuts must cause recessions, because the current recession began just a few years after large tax cuts.

(a) Premise – the current recession began just a few years after large tax cuts

Conclusion – tax cuts must cause recessions

(b) Just because the recession began after tax cuts does not necessarily mean that the tax cuts caused the recession. The recession could have been caused by other effects in the economy.

Example 2: (Circular reasoning) Illegal immigration is against the law, so illegal immigrants are criminals.

(a) Premise - Illegal immigration is against the law.

Conclusion – Illegal immigrants are criminals.

(b) The premise and the conclusion are saying the same thing just with a few different words.

For the following examples, identify the premise(s) and conclusion, explain why the argument is deceptive, and, if possible, identify the type of fallacy it represents.

Example 3: The polls show the Republican candidate leading by a 2 to 1 margin. So you should vote for the Republican.

- Premise – the polls show the Republican candidate leading by a 2 to 1 margin.
- Conclusion – you should vote for the Republican
- This example uses Appeal to Majority – even if everyone else votes a certain way, that doesn't necessarily mean that you should.

Example 4: He refused to testify by invoking his Fifth Amendment rights, so he must be guilty.

- Premise – he refused to testify by invoking his Fifth Amendment rights
- Conclusion – he must be guilty
- This example uses Limited Choice – it artificially precludes choices that ought to be considered; he could have decided not to testify so that he didn't implicate someone else in his testimony