

Activity Type

Reading, matching, writing, listening and speaking activity, pair work

Focus

Debating skills

Identifying logical fallacies

Aim

To become familiar with 12 common informal logical fallacies and to practice identifying them.

Preparation

Make a copy of the two-page worksheet for each student.

Level

Advanced (C1)

Time

45 minutes

Introduction

In this logical fallacies worksheet, students become familiar with 12 common informal logical fallacies and practice identifying them.

Procedure

Give each student a copy of the two-page worksheet.

To begin, students read a short text about debating and logical fallacies and then match important key terms in bold from the text to their correct definitions.

Exercise A - Answer key

1. premise 2. fallacy 3. claim 4. rebut

Next, students read explanations of 12 common logical fallacies and match them to examples. This can be done either individually, in pairs, or small groups.

Exercise B - Answer key

1. k 2. h 3. l 4. a 5. b 6. d

7. c 8. e 9. i 10. j 11. f 12. g

After that, students choose three of the logical fallacies from the list of 12 and create their own examples of each.

When the students have completed their three examples, divide them into groups of three or four.

Finally, the students take turns sharing one of their examples and the other students try to correctly identify the logical fallacy.

A. Read the text about debating and logical fallacies and then match the words in bold from the text to their correct definitions.

Successful debating requires an awareness of some of the most common logical fallacies. This helps you avoid them and not weaken any argument or **claim** that you make. Equally, you need to be able to detect and **rebut** these same fallacies to weaken your opponent's argument.

A logical fallacy is an error in reasoning that weakens your argument. There are two broad categories of logical fallacy - formal and informal. This worksheet deals with informal fallacies only. An informal logical **fallacy** is a flaw in the **premise** of an argument, which makes the argument appear unsound, even though it may still be valid. An informal fallacy can occur because the premise of an argument is false, or because it is unrelated to the issue.

1. an idea or theory on which a statement or action is based.
2. an idea that a lot of people think is true but is in fact false.
3. a statement that something is true, although you have not proved it.
4. to argue that a statement or claim is not true.

B. Read the fallacies below and match them to their examples on the next page.

1. Appeal to ignorance: Believing a claim is true because it can't be proven false or vice versa.
2. Ad hominem: Attacking the person making the argument, rather than directly addressing the issue.
3. Strawman fallacy: Distorting or overstating an opponent's argument to make it easier to attack.
4. Bandwagon fallacy: Claiming an argument is true because it has popular support.
5. False dilemma: Thinking there are only two possible conclusions when there may be alternatives not yet considered.
6. Begging the question: An argument that makes a claim by repeating the same thing in different words.
7. Appeal to tradition: Arguing that a traditional practice must be good, or better than its newer alternative.
8. Appeal to emotions: Trying to persuade somebody through emotions such as fear, anger, or ridicule rather than by making a rational case.
9. Appeal to authority: A belief that just because an authority, expert, or a person with influence and power believes something that it must be true.
10. Red herring: An attempt to redirect attention away from a relevant issue by introducing another, irrelevant issue.
11. Slippery slope: A claim that one event leads to another event and so on until we come to an awful or disastrous conclusion.
12. False correlation: Making a claim that just because two events happen at the same time, that one must have caused the other.

- a. Everyone is going on the new Keto diet. Why aren't you?
- b. If we want our country to be safe, we must build more prisons.
- c. Drinking cappuccino after midday is wrong because we have never done that in our country.
- d. A free and open press is one of the most important characteristics of a modern society because modern, open societies value the freedom that news outlets have to report on issues.
- e. People who want to ban guns don't understand that we are under constant threat. If we ban guns, our homes will get attacked much more often than they do now. Citizens need guns to protect themselves.
- f. If we ban guns, the next thing you know, we won't be able to defend ourselves against terrorist attacks, and when that happens, terrorists will invade and take control of our country.
- g. A recent study found that when ice cream sales rose, the number of shark attacks increased.
- h. If you had graduated from a prestigious school, you would know how to properly grade a writing assignment.
- i. I am not worried about climate change because my professor believes that global warming is not actually caused by human activity.
- j. Our government has worked hard to reduce crime. What our country needs is economic growth that can only come from a team that has strong credentials.
- k. There is no proof that ghosts don't exist, so it's possible they exist. There are some plausible explanations for ghosts, such as hallucinations. But, having other explanations for ghosts doesn't prove that they don't exist.
- l. A: Sure, many video games are violent, but they are just a way for teenagers to vent some of their frustrations.

B: OK. But if you support this type of violence then I guess you will have no problem with young people going out and shooting up schools?

C. Write your own example logical fallacies below. Then, in small groups, take turns sharing them with the other students to see if they can correctly identify the fallacy.

- 1.
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- 2.
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- 3.
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