

Fallacy Short Descriptions

Appeal to Authority: Advocate makes an unwarranted appeal to an authoritative person or organization in support of a proposition.

Argument by Artifice: Advocate puts forward convoluted and weak assertions which any disinterested observer would perceive as artificially constructed in order to make a case.

Argument by Slogan: Advocate uses a simplistic statement or slogan rather than logical argument in a debate or discussion.

Argument to Consequences: Advocate claims that a proposition cannot be true because it ought not to be true (or vice versa).

Begging the Question: Advocate makes a circular argument where the conclusion is in essence a restatement or paraphrase of the premise.

Browbeating: Advocate is threatening and overbearing in argument and doesn't allow the opponent the opportunity to state his or her case.

Burden of Proof: Advocate fails to take responsibility for arguing a case by claiming that the opponent must first prove that the opposite case is true.

Burden of Solution: Advocate denigrates a suggested solution to a problem but fails to propose a viable alternative.

Cultural Origins: Advocate makes an unwarranted claim that a particular way of doing things is best because of its cultural origins.

Exaggerated Conflict: Advocate claims that because there is some degree of uncertainty in a domain of knowledge, nothing at all is certain.

Factoid Propagation: Advocate asserts the truth of a proposition that is commonly assumed to be true, when it is not in fact established as true.

False Analogy: Advocate puts forward an analogy in support of a case, but the analogy only has superficial similarities to the case in question.

False Attribution: Advocate appeals to an irrelevant, unqualified, unidentified, biased or fabricated source in support of an argument.

False Cause; Correlation Error: Advocate asserts that there is a causal link between phenomena, when the link is only apparent rather than real.

False Compromise: Advocate seeks to reconcile two differing views by "splitting the difference" and falsely claiming that the result reflects reality.

False Dichotomy: Advocate represents an issue as "black or white" when in fact the reality is "shades of grey".

False Dilemma: Advocate portrays one option as necessarily excluding another option, when in fact there is no necessary connection.

False Positioning: Advocate attacks a weakened, exaggerated, or oversimplified form of the opponent's position rather than the real position.

Gibberish: Advocate presents an argument or assertion that is so garbled in its presentation that it is essentially meaningless.

Impugning Motives: Advocate makes an unwarranted claim that the opponent has devious motives.

Misuse of Information: Advocate misunderstands or deliberately misuses a statistic, fact or theory to support an argument.

Moral Equivalence: Advocate seeks to draw false moral comparisons between two phenomena which are not morally equivalent.

Moving the Goalposts: Advocate changes the discussion focus by seeking to force the opponent to tackle a more difficult or different version of the topic.

Observational Selection: Advocate pays close attention to confirming evidence, but ignores evidence which is contrary to his or her position.

Personal Abuse: Advocate mounts a personal attack on the opponent rather than the argument put forward by the opponent.

Poisoning the Well: Advocate seeks to undermine an opponent's position by linking the position to an original source which is unjustly denigrated.

Popular Opinion: Advocate makes an unwarranted appeal to popular opinion (e.g. "most people agree that...") in support of a proposition.

Sanctimony: Advocate makes an unwarranted claim that his or her position is morally superior to the opponent's position.

Simple-Minded Certitude: Advocate has an unshakeable belief which remains unchanged even in the face of overwhelming contrary evidence.

Single Cause: Advocate asserts that there is only one cause of a phenomenon or problem, when the evidence suggests multiple factors.

Slippery Slope: Advocate asserts without evidence that if we take "one step in the wrong direction", it will inexorably lead to catastrophe.

Special Pleading: Advocate claims special insights into an issue, and that the opponent is incapable of achieving the same level of understanding.

Stacking the Deck: Advocate is aware of counter-arguments to his or her position, but conceals them in order to defeat the opponent.

Unfounded Generalization: Advocate draws a general conclusion about a phenomenon based on unrepresentative examples of the phenomenon.

Weasel Words: Advocate uses emotionally loaded labels to boost his or her position or to denigrate the opponent's position.

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