

Logical Fallacies

In order to argue effectively for the Christian worldview, believers should possess a basic knowledge of logical fallacies. Just as knowledge without wisdom is detrimental, so is knowing Scripture without understanding how to use it. It is one thing to know that the Bible is true, it is another to discern the errors in all arguments that attempt to contradict it. The following is a basic glossary of both informal and formal logical fallacies. Feel free to add examples below each heading as you encounter them.

- **Informal Fallacies**

- Reification: Attributing a concrete characteristic to something abstract.
- Equivocation: Shifting from one meaning of a word to another within an argument.
- Begging the Question: Merely assuming what one is attempting to prove.
- Question-begging Epithet: Using biased (often emotional) language to persuade people rather than using logic.
- Complex Question: Attempting to persuade by asking a “loaded question.”
- Bifurcation: Claiming there are only two mutually exclusive possibilities when there may actually be three or more options.
- Ad Hominem: Directing an argument against the person making the claim rather than the claim itself.
- Faulty Appeal to Authority: Endorsing a claim simply based on the person making it.
- The Strawman Fallacy: Misrepresenting an opponent’s position and proceeding to refute the misrepresentation rather than what the opponent actually claims.

- Genetic Fallacy: Dismissing an argument because one objects to the source of the argument.
- The Fallacy of Composition: Arguing that what is true of the parts must also be true of the whole, or what is true of the members of a group is also true of the group.
- Fallacy of Division: Arguing that what is true of the whole must also be true of the parts
- Hasty Generalization: Drawing a generalization from too few specific examples
- Sweeping Generalization: Applying a generalization to an exception.
- The “No True Scotsman” Fallacy: When an arguer defines a term in a biased way to protect his argument from rebuttals.
- Special Pleading: Fallacy of applying a double standard.
- False Analogy: Making a comparison between two things that are alike in only trivial ways, irrelevant to the argument.
- The Fallacy of False Cause: Attributing a false cause-and-effect relationship between two events.
- The Slippery Slope Fallacy: Arguing that a particular action will set off an undesirable chain of events, when in reality other factors would tend to prevent such a result.
- Fallacy of Irrelevant Thesis: Proving a point, but not the point at issue.
- The Appeal to Force/Fear: Arguing for a position on the basis that negative consequences will follow if a person does not accept the position.

- The Appeal to Emotion: Fallacy of attempting to persuade people by stirring powerful emotions rather than making a logical case.
- The Appeal to Pity: Persuading people to accept a position by generating sympathy for those who hold the position.
- The Appeal to Ignorance: Fallacy of appealing to the unknown; specifically when a person argues that a claim is probably true simply because it has never been proven false.
- The Naturalistic Fallacy: Arguing that since something is a particular way, it is morally acceptable for it to be that way.
- The Moralistic Fallacy: Asserting that because something should be a particular way, it is a particular way.
- The “Fallacy Fallacy”: Assuming that a claim is false simply because an argument for that position is fallacious.
- **Formal Fallacies**
 - Affirming the Consequent
 - Denying the Antecedent