



# Propaganda and Faulty Logic

## Recognizing Propaganda Techniques and Errors of Faulty Logic

### *Propaganda Techniques*

- **What are Propaganda Techniques?** They are the methods and approaches used to spread ideas that further a cause - a political, commercial, religious, or civil cause.
- **Why are they used?** To manipulate the readers' or viewers' reason and emotions; to persuade you to believe in something or someone, buy an item, or vote a certain way.
- **What are the most commonly used propaganda techniques?** See which of the ten most common types of propaganda techniques you already know.

### Types of Propaganda Techniques:

<b>Name calling:</b>	This techniques consists of attaching a negative label to a person or a thing. People engage in this type of behavior when they are trying to avoid supporting their own opinion with facts. Rather than explain what they believe in, they prefer to try to tear their opponent down.
<b>Glittering Generalities:</b>	This technique uses important-sounding "glad words" that have little or no real meaning. These words are used in general statements that cannot be proved or disproved. Words like "good," "honest," "fair," and "best" are examples of "glad" words.
<b>Transfer:</b>	In this technique, an attempt is made to transfer the prestige of a positive symbol to a person or an idea. For example, using the American flag as a backdrop for a political event makes the implication that the event is patriotic in the best interest of the U.S.
<b>False Analogy:</b>	In this technique, two things that may or may not really be similar are portrayed as being similar. When examining the comparison, you must ask yourself how similar the items are. In most false analogies, there is simply not enough evidence available to support the comparison.
<b>Testimonial:</b>	This technique is easy to understand. It is when "big name" personalities are used to endorse a product. Whenever you see someone famous endorsing a product, ask yourself how much that person knows about the product, and what he or she stands to gain by promoting it.
<b>Plain Folks:</b>	This technique uses a folksy approach to convince us to support someone or something. These ads depict people with ordinary looks doing ordinary activities.
<b>Card Stacking:</b>	This term comes from stacking a deck of cards in your favor. Card stacking is



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used to slant a message. Key words or unfavorable statistics may be omitted in an ad or commercial, leading to a series of half-truths. Keep in mind that an advertiser is under no obligation "to give the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

**Bandwagon:** The "bandwagon" approach encourages you to think that because everyone else is doing something, you should do it too, or you'll be left out. The technique embodies a "keeping up with the Joneses" philosophy.

**Either/or fallacy:** This technique is also called "black-and-white thinking" because only two choices are given. You are either for something or against it; there is no middle ground or shades of gray. It is used to polarize issues, and negates all attempts to find a common ground.

**Faulty Cause and Effect:** This technique suggests that because B follows A, A must cause B. Remember, just because two events or two sets of data are related does not necessarily mean that one caused the other to happen. It is important to evaluate data carefully before jumping to a wrong conclusion.

## Errors of Faulty Logic

**Contradiction:** Information is presented that is in direct opposition to other information within the same argument.

Example: If someone stated that schools were overstaffed, then later argued for the necessity of more counselors, that person would be guilty of contradiction.

**Accident:** Someone fails to recognize (or conceals the fact) that an argument is based on an exception to the rule.

Example: By using selected scholar-athletes as the norm, one could argue that larger sports programs in schools were vital to improving academic performance of all students.

**False Cause:** A temporal order of events is confused with causality; or, someone oversimplifies a complex causal network.

Example: Stating that poor performance in schools is caused by poverty; poverty certainly contributes to poor academic performance, but it is not the only factor.



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## **Begging the Question:**

A person makes a claim then argues for it by advancing grounds whose meaning is simply equivalent to that of the original claim. This is also called "circular reasoning."

Example: Someone argues that schools should continue to have textbooks read from cover to cover because, otherwise, students would not be well-educated. When asked to define what "well-educated" means, the person says, "knowing what is in the textbooks."

## **Evading the Issue:**

Someone sidesteps and issue by changing the topic.

Example: When asked to say whether or not the presence of homosexuals in the army could be a disruptive force, a speaker presents examples of homosexuals winning combat medals for bravery.

## **Arguing from Ignorance:**

Someone argues that a claim is justified simply because its opposite cannot be proven.

Example: A person argues that voucher programs will not harm schools, since no one has ever proven that vouchers have harmed schools.

## **Composition and Division:**

Composition involves an assertion about a whole that is true of its parts. Division is the opposite: an assertion about all of the parts that is true about the whole.

Example: When a school system holds up its above-average scores and claims that its students are superior, it is committing the fallacy of division. Overall scores may be higher but that does not prove all students are performing at that level. Likewise, when the military points to the promiscuous behavior of some homosexuals, it is committing the fallacy of composition: the behavior of some cannot serve as proof of-the behavior of all homosexuals.

## **Errors of Attack**

### **Poisoning the Well:**

A person is so committed to a position that he/she explains away absolutely everything others offer in opposition.

Example: Almost every proponent and opponent on the ban on gays in the military commits this error.

### **Ad Hominem:**

A person rejects a claim on the basis of derogatory facts (real or alleged) about the person making the claim.



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	Example: Someone rejects President Clinton's reasons for lifting the ban on gays in the military because of Mr. Clinton's draft record.
<b>Appealing to Force:</b>	Someone uses threats to establish the validity of the claim.
	Example: Opponents of year-round school threaten to keep their children out of school during the summer months.

## *Errors of Weak Reference*

<b>Appeal to Authority:</b>	Authority is evoked as the last word on an issue.
	Example: Someone uses the Bible as the basis for his arguments against specific school reform issues.
<b>Appeal to the People:</b>	Someone attempts to justify a claim on the basis of popularity.
	Example: Opponents of year-round school claim that students would hate it.
<b>Appeal to Emotion:</b>	An emotion-laden "sob" story is used as proof for a claim.
	Example: A politician uses a sad story of a child being killed in a drive-by shooting to gain support for a year-round school measure.