Logical Fallacies

How to Develop Your Argument Skills
Fallacies are common errors in reasoning that will undermine your argument’s logic.

- Illegitimate arguments or irrelevant points
- No evidence

= Logical fallacy

You wouldn’t like me when I’m angry...
Because I always back up my rage with facts and documented sources.
-The Credible Hulk
Exercise 1:

Go to the Logical Fallacies Activity Sheet and, using the criteria on the previous slide, answer the following question: Have you ever used a fallacy before and lost an argument? Have you ever tried to argue with someone who was only speaking in logical fallacies? Provide examples.
Common Logical Fallacies: Hasty Generalization

- **Hasty Generalization**: a conclusion based on insufficient or biased evidence. When a speaker uses a hasty generalization, they are rushing to a conclusion before they have all the relevant facts.

![Diagram showing the combination of insufficient or biased evidence and rushing to a conclusion before having all the facts to form a hasty generalization.]
Go back to the Logical Fallacies Exercise Sheet and answer the following question:

- The hulk and the thing fight a lot. Often they start throwing punches before they even speak to each other.
- Explain how their fights are always a result of a logical fallacy (hasty generalization).
Common Logical Fallacies: Circular Argument

- **Circular Argument:** A circular argument restates the argument rather than proving it.
  - **Example 1:** Only people who are in good shape can run fast. Running fast gets people in good shape.
  - **Example 2:** I can spend money because I have a credit card. I need a credit card so I can spend money.
Common Logical Fallacies: Circular Argument

Go back to the Logical Fallacies Exercise Sheet and answer the following question:

- How does the Dilbert cartoon below illustrate a circular argument?
Common Logical Fallacies: Ad Hominem Attack

- **Ad Hominem Attack**: An ad hominem attacks a person’s character rather than his or her opinions or arguments.
- [Click here for an example.](#)
Go back to the Logical Fallacies Exercise Sheet and answer the following question:

- What kind of tone or mood can ad hominem attacks set? Develop a hypothesis as to why you think ad hominem attacks weaken an argument.
Red Herring: A diversionary tactic that avoids the key issue(s), often by avoiding opposing arguments rather than addressing them.
Common Logical Fallacies: Red Herring

Go back to the Logical Fallacies Exercise Sheet and answer the following question:

- The man on this billboard is the notorious unabomber, known for putting bombs in people’s mailboxes that would explode when the mailboxes were opened. Explain how the billboard about global warming uses the red herring logical fallacy.
Go back to the Logical Fallacies Exercise Sheet and complete the following assignment:

• Find an example of one the logical fallacies you just learned about (hasty generalization, circular argument, ad hominem attack, red herring) in music or on social media. Then, construct an argument as to how the logical fallacy impacts that speaker’s argument.
In conclusion…

- Why is it so important to understand logical fallacies when developing or evaluating an argument?
  - Identifying logical fallacies can help you strengthen your arguments in your writing.
  - Pointing out a logical fallacy can help you win an argument.
    - Want to back up your point? Trying to prove something? Find a way to prove your opponent’s counterpoint is a logical fallacy.
  - Avoid logical fallacies in your own writing. Logical fallacies do not strengthen an argument, they only make it weaker.
Sources

- Information about logical fallacies retrieved from:
  https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/659/03/