

Critical Thinking: Rhetorical Devices & Fallacies

<p>Rhetorical Devices: A category of language techniques people use when their primary objective is to influence beliefs and attitudes and behavior. Below are types of rhetorical devices:</p>	
Euphemisms	A neutral or positive expression instead of one that carries negative associations
Dysphemism	Used to produce a negative effect on a listener's or reader's attitude toward something or to tone down the positive associations it may have
Rhetorical Comparison	Used to express or influence attitudes (comparing a small person to an Chihuahua or gnome rather than to an elf)
Rhetorical Definitions	Smuggle prejudice of one sort or another into the meaning of a term (abortion vs. murder of an unborn child)
Rhetorical Explanations	A slanting device clothed as an explanation (He lost the fight because he lost his nerve.)
Stereotype	Is a thought or image about a group of people based on little or no evidence
Innuendo	A form of suggestion, enables us to insinuate something deprecatory about something or someone without actually saying it
Loaded Questions	Rests on one or more unnecessary or unfair assumptions. If there is no reason to think that this assumption is true, then the question is loaded.
Weaslers	A way to water down or weaken a claim to help protect it from criticism, giving the author a way out in case the claim is challenged.
Downplayers	An attempt to make someone or something look less important or significant. Context of a claim can determine if it downplays or not.
Horse Laugh/ Ridicule/ Sarcasm	Someone getting a laugh at another person's expense, but not actually putting forth any objection to the claim.
Hyperbole	Extravagant overstatement; a claim that exaggerates for effect, depending on the strength of it's language and the point being made
Proof Surrogates	An expression used to suggest that there is evidence or authority for a claim without actually citing such evidence or authority

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Psychological and Related Fallacies: Devices that go beyond the rhetorical pattern, and can be made to look like reasonable arguments containing premises and conclusions, but give no real support for the conclusion.	
“Argument” from Outrage	Inflammatory words (or thoughts) followed by a “conclusion” of some sort. Substitutes anger for reason and judgment in considering an issue
Scapegoating	Blaming a certain group of people, or even one person only, for all of life’s troubles
Scare Tactics	Trying to scare someone into doing something or accepting a position
“Argument” by Force	Threatening a person into taking a certain position or action on an issue
“Argument” from Pity	When feeling sorry for someone drives us to a position on an unrelated matter
“Argument” from Envy	When we find fault with someone because of envy
Apple Polishing	Allowing praise of oneself to substitute for judgment about the truth of a claim, or trying to get others to do this
Guilt Trip	Eliciting feelings of guilt to get others to do or not do something
Wishful Thinking	When we accept or urge acceptance (or rejection) of a claim simply because it would be pleasant (or unpleasant) if it were true
Peer Pressure “Argument”	When desire for acceptance motivates us to accept a claim not because of it’s merits, but because we will gain someone’s approval (or avoid losing approval)
Group Think Fallacy	When one substitutes pride of membership in a group for reason and deliberation in arriving at a position on an issue (includes nationalism)
Rationalizing Fallacy	When we use a false pretext to satisfy our own desires or interests
“Argument” from Popularity	When we urge someone to accept a claim simply on the grounds that all or most of some substantial number of people (other than experts or authorities) believe it
“Argument” from Common Practice	Trying to justify or defend an action or practice (rather than an assertion or claim) on the grounds that it is common
“Argument” from Tradition	Doing things because that’s the way things have always been done, and believing

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	things because that's what's always been believed.
Relativism	The Theory that "truth is relative", or that the same claim may be true in one culture and false in another; it all depends on what the people within the culture think. (Relating to factual claims)
Subjectivism	The assumption that what is true for one person is not necessarily true for another. (Relating to factual claims)
"Two wrongs make a right"	The belief that "getting even" by doing something wrong is somehow made right by the reasoning that it's in response to someone else's wrongful behavior
Red Herring	When a person introduces a topic into conversation to distract from the original point
Smokescreen	Piles issues on or make them extremely complicated until the original issue is lost in the "smoke"
Ad Hominem	When we think that considerations of a person "refute" the person's assertions
Inconsistency ad hominem	The idea of saying something is wrong because someone changed his or her mind. The fact that people change their minds has no bearing on the truth of what they say either before or after.
Poisoning the Well	"ad hominem in advance", or when person A "poisons" your mind by telling you something unfavorable about person B, that will cause you to be more likely to reject what person B tells you.
Genetic Fallacy	When we try to refute a claim based on the origin or history of the claim
Straw Man	When you "refute" a claim by distorting, oversimplifying, or misrepresenting a claim. It attempts to "refute" a claim by altering it so that it seems patently false or even ridiculous.
False Dilemma	When someone limits your considerations to only two alternatives even though other alternatives are available
Perfectionist Fallacy	The idea that an item must be perfect, or it is wrong.
Line-Drawing Fallacy	The fallacy of insisting that a line must be drawn at some precise point when in fact it