

EXERCISES ON INFORMAL FALLACIES

The bottom of the slide features a decorative design with overlapping geometric shapes. On the left, there is a light blue triangle pointing towards the center. Overlapping this and extending across the bottom is a larger, olive-green shape that also has a triangular point on the left side, creating a layered effect.

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PART I

IDENTIFY THE **FALLACIES OF RELEVANCE** COMMITTED BY THE FOLLOWING ARGUMENTS, GIVING A BRIEF EXPLANATION FOR YOUR ANSWER. IF NO FALLACY IS COMMITTED, WRITE “**NO FALLACY.**”

1. The position open in the accounting department should be given to Frank Thompson. Frank has six hungry children to feed, and his wife desperately needs an operation to save her eyesight.
2. Erica Evans, who takes orders at the local Taco Bell, argues persuasively in favor of increasing the minimum wage. But this is exactly what you would expect. Erica is paid the minimum wage, and if the minimum wage is increased, then her own salary will go up. Obviously Erica’s arguments are worthless.
3. Whoever thrusts a knife into another person should be arrested. But surgeons do precisely this when operating. Therefore, surgeons should be arrested.

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1. You should read Irving Stone's latest novel right away. It's sold over a million copies, and practically everyone in the Manhattan cocktail circuit is talking about it.
2. Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy is not worth the paper it's printed on. Nietzsche was an immoral reprobate who went completely insane from syphilis before he died.
3. Surely you welcome the opportunity to join our protective organization. Think of all the money you will lose from broken windows, overturned trucks, and damaged merchandise in the event of your not joining.

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1. Senator Barrow advocates increased Social Security benefits for the poor. It is regrettable that the senator finds it necessary to advocate socialism. Socialism defeats initiative, takes away promised rewards, and leads directly to inefficiency and big government. It was tried for years in Eastern Europe, and it failed miserably. Clearly, socialism is no good.
2. Something is seriously wrong with high school education these days. After ten years of decline, SAT scores are still extremely low, and high school graduates are practically incapable of reading and writing. The obvious conclusion is that we should close the schools.
3. The editors of the *Daily Register* have accused our company of being one of the city's worst water polluters. But the *Daily Register* is responsible for much more pollution than we are. After all, they own the Western Paper Company, and that company discharges tons of chemical residue into the city's river every day.

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1. If 20 percent of adult Americans are functionally illiterate, then it's no wonder that morons get elected to public office. In fact, 20 percent of adult Americans *are* functionally illiterate. Therefore, it's no wonder that morons get elected to public office.
2. Ladies and gentlemen, today the lines of battle have been drawn. When the din of clashing armor has finally died away, the Republican party will emerge victorious! We are the true party of the American people! We embody the values that all real Americans hold sacred! We cherish and protect our founding fathers' vision that gave birth to the Constitution! We stand for decency and righteousness; for self-determination and the liberty to conduct our affairs as each of us freely chooses! In the coming election, victory will be ours, so help us God!
3. We've all heard the argument that too much television is the reason our students can't read and write. Yet many of today's TV shows are excellent. *Grey's Anatomy* unveils the personal lives of interns at an urban hospital, *The Big Bang Theory* offers lots

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1. Surely architect Norris is not responsible for the collapse of the Central Bank Tower. Norris has had nothing but trouble lately. His daughter eloped with a child molester, his son committed suicide, and his alcoholic wife recently left for Las Vegas with his retirement savings.
2. The First Amendment to the Constitution prevents the government from interfering with the free exercise of religion. The liturgical practice of the Religion of Internal Enlightenment involves human sacrifice. Therefore, it would be wrong for the government to interfere with this religious practice.
3. U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren argues that big banks have been ripping off the American consumer for years. It's clear, however, that Warren says this only to scratch up more campaign contributions from those very consumers. Thus, you shouldn't take her arguments seriously.

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1. Professor Pearson's arguments in favor of the theory of evolution should be discounted. Pearson is a cocaine-snorting sex pervert and, according to some reports, a member of the Communist Party.
2. Rudolf Höss, commandant of the Auschwitz concentration camp, confessed to having exterminated 1 million people, most of whom were Jews, in the Auschwitz gas chamber. We can only conclude that Höss was either insane or an extremely evil person.
3. TV commentator Larry Kudlow argues that government should get off the back of the American businessman. Obviously, Kudlow wants to abolish government altogether. Yet without government there would be no defense, no judicial system, no Social Security, and no health and safety regulations. None of us wants to forgo these benefits. Thus, we can see that Kudlow's argument is absurd.

1. I know that some of you oppose the appointment of David Cole as the new sales manager. On further consideration, however, I am confident you will find him well qualified for the job. If Cole is not appointed, it may become necessary to make severe personnel cutbacks in your department.
2. Animal rights activists say that animals are abused in biomedical research labs. But consider this: Pets are abused by their owners every day. Probably 25 percent of pet owners should never get near animals. Some cases of abuse are enough to make you sick.
3. Of course you want to buy a pair of Slinky fashion jeans. Slinky jeans really show off your figure, and all the Hollywood starlets down on the Strip can be seen wearing them these days.

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1. Film star Catherine Zeta-Jones says on TV that T-Mobile provides the coverage you need at the price you want. But this is exactly what you would expect given that T-Mobile pays her millions of dollars to make these ads. Thus, you shouldn't take her testimonials too seriously.
2. Dr. Morrison has argued that smoking is responsible for the majority of health problems in this country and that every smoker who has even the slightest concern for his or her health should quit. Unfortunately, however, we must consign Dr. Morrison's argument to the trash bin. Only yesterday I saw none other than Dr. Morrison himself smoking a cigar.
3. Mr. Rhodes is suffering from amnesia and has no recollection whatever of the events of the past two weeks. We can only conclude that he did not commit the crime of murdering his wife a week ago, as he has been accused of doing.

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ANSWER “TRUE” OR “FALSE” TO THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS:

1. In the appeal to force, the arguer physically attacks the listener.
2. In the direct variety of the appeal to the people, the arguer attempts to create a kind of mob mentality.
3. If an arguer attempts to discredit court room testimony or a promise by pointing out that the witness or the person making the promise is a liar, then the arguer commits an *argumentum ad hominem* (argument against the person) fallacy.
4. The *argumentum ad hominem* always involves two arguers.
5. In the *argumentum ad hominem* circumstantial, the circumstances cited by the second arguer are intended precisely to malign the character of the first arguer.
6. In the *tu quoque* fallacy, the arguer threatens the reader or listener.
7. In the fallacy of accident, a general rule is applied to a specific case where it does not fit.
8. In the straw man fallacy, an arguer often distorts another person's argument by

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PART II

IDENTIFY THE FALLACIES OF **WEAK INDUCTION** COMMITTED BY THE FOLLOWING ARGUMENTS, GIVING A BRIEF EXPLANATION FOR YOUR ANSWER. IF NO FALLACY IS COMMITTED, WRITE “**NO FALLACY.**”

1. The *Daily News* carried an article this morning about three local teenagers who were arrested on charges of drug possession. Teenagers these days are nothing but a bunch of junkies.
2. If a car breaks down on the freeway, a passing mechanic is not obligated to render emergency road service. For similar reasons, if a person suffers a heart attack on the street, a passing physician is not obligated to render emergency medical assistance.
3. There must be something to psychical research. Three famous physicists—Oliver Lodge, James Jeans, and Arthur Stanley Eddington—took it seriously.

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1. The secretaries have asked us to provide lounge areas where they can spend their coffee breaks. This request will have to be refused. If we give them lounge areas, next they'll be asking for spas and swimming pools. Then it will be racquet ball courts, tennis courts, and fitness centers. Expenditures for these facilities will drive us into bankruptcy.
2. The accumulation of pressure in a society is similar to the buildup of pressure in a boiler. If the pressure in a boiler increases beyond a critical point, the boiler will explode. Accordingly, if a government represses its people beyond a certain point, the people will rise up in revolt.
3. A few minutes after Governor Harrison finished his speech on television, a devastating earthquake struck southern Alaska. For the safety of the people up there, it is imperative that Governor Harrison make no more speeches.

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1. No one has ever been able to prove the existence of extrasensory perception. We must therefore conclude that extrasensory perception is a myth.
2. Lester Brown, universally respected author of the yearly *State of the World* report, has said that the destruction of tropical rain forests is one of the ten most serious worldwide problems. Thus, it must be the case that this is indeed a very serious problem.
3. Bill Gates and Warren Buffet give millions of dollars to charitable causes every year. It must be the case that all wealthy people give huge amounts of money to charity every year.

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1. North Korean leader Kim Jong-un says that his country's nuclear program is purely for peaceful purposes. Therefore, given Mr. Kim's familiarity with that program, we should not think for a moment that he plans to use it to develop nuclear weapons.
2. Probably no life exists on Venus. Teams of scientists have conducted exhaustive studies of the planet's surface and atmosphere, and no living organisms have been found.
3. We don't dare let the animal-rights activists get their foot in the door. If they sell us on the idea that dogs, cats, and dolphins have rights, next it will be chickens and cows. That means no more chicken Kiev or prime rib. Next it will be worms and insects. This will lead to the decimation of our agricultural industry. The starvation of the human race will follow close behind.

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1. Guns can kill someone; so can cars. It would be ridiculous to restrict the purchase of automobiles. So restrictions on purchasing guns should not exist
2. No one has proved conclusively that America's nuclear power plants constitute a danger to people living in their immediate vicinity. Therefore, it is perfectly safe to continue to build nuclear power plants near large metropolitan centers.
3. There are more churches in New York City than in any other city in the nation, and more crimes are committed in New York City than anywhere else. So, if we are to eliminate crime, we must abolish the churches.

II. ANSWER “TRUE” OR “FALSE” TO THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS:

1. If an arguer cites a statement by a recognized expert in support of a conclusion and the statement falls within the expert's range of expertise, then the arguer commits an appeal to unqualified authority.
2. If an arguer cites a statement in support of a conclusion and the statement reflects the strong bias of its author, then the arguer commits an appeal to unqualified authority.
3. In the appeal to ignorance, the arguer accuses the reader or listener of being ignorant.
4. If an attorney for the defense in an American or Canadian criminal trial argues that the prosecution has proved nothing beyond a reasonable doubt about the guilt of the defendant, then the attorney commits an appeal to ignorance.
5. Hasty generalization always proceeds from the particular to the general.
6. The *post hoc ergo propter hoc* variety of the false cause fallacy presumes that *X* causes *Y* merely because *X* happens before *Y*.
7. If an argument concludes that *X* causes *Y* simply because *X* and *Y* occur over the same time interval, then the argument commits the *non causa pro causa* variety of the false cause fallacy.
8. If the conclusion of an argument depends on the occurrence of a

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IDENTIFY THE **FALLACIES OF RELEVANCE** AND **WEAK INDUCTION** COMMITTED BY THE FOLLOWING ARGUMENTS. IF NO FALLACY IS COMMITTED, WRITE **“NO FALLACY.”**

1. Emily has bought over 100 tickets on the weekly state lottery, and she has never won anything. Therefore, the likelihood increases every week that she will win something if she continues to buy tickets.
2. Ellen Quinn has argued that logic is not the most important thing in life. Apparently Ellen advocates irrationality. It has taken two million years for the human race to achieve the position that it has, and Ellen would throw the whole thing into the garbage.
3. Johnny, of course I deserve the use of your bicycle for the afternoon. After all, I'm sure you wouldn't want your mother to find out that you played hooky today.

1. Practically everyone downloads music free of charge from the Internet these days. Therefore, you should have no qualms about doing this yourself.
 2. When water is poured on the top of a pile of rocks, it always trickles down to the rocks on the bottom. Similarly, when rich people make lots of money, we can expect this money to trickle down to the poor.
 3. Extensive laboratory tests have failed to prove any deleterious side effects of the new painkiller lexaprine. We conclude that lexaprine is safe for human consumption.
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1. Environmentalists accuse us of blocking the plan to convert Antarctica into a world park. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. Antarctica is a huge continent teeming with life. It is the home of millions of penguins, seals, sea birds, and sea lions. Also, great schools of finfish and whales inhabit its coastal waters.
2. Michael Moore, the documentary filmmaker, argues that capitalist institutions are ravaging America's middle class and walking away with billions of dollars in their pockets. But Moore is just a big, fat, populist rabble-rouser, and a multimillionaire to boot. He should keep his mouth shut.
3. The operation of a camera is similar in many ways to the operation of an eye. If you are to see anything in a darkened room, the pupils of your eyes must first dilate. Accordingly, if you are to take a photograph (without flash) in a darkened room, the aperture of the camera lens must first be increased.

1. Certainly Miss Malone will be a capable and efficient manager. She has a great figure, a gorgeous face, and tremendous poise, and she dresses very fashionably.
2. James Dobson, founder of Focus on the Family, says that men have the divine obligation to lead their families, and women have the divine obligation to submit to their husband's authority. Given Dobson's apparent ability to receive messages from God, we must conclude that this statement is absolutely true.
3. Dear Internal Revenue Service: I received a notice that my taxes are being audited for last year. But you have no right to do this. The deadline for filing a return was April 15, and I filed my tax return on April 12—a full three days before the deadline.

1. To prevent dangerous weapons from being carried aboard airliners, those seeking to board must pass through a magnetometer and submit to a possible pat-down search. Therefore, to prevent alcohol and drugs from being carried into rock concerts, those entering should submit to similar search procedures.
2. Mr. Flemming's arguments against the rent-control initiative on the September ballot should be taken with a grain of salt. As a landlord he would naturally be expected to oppose the initiative.
3. India is suffering a serious drought, thousands of children are dying of starvation in their mothers' arms, and homeless beggars line the streets of the major cities. Surely we must give these poor downtrodden people the chance of bettering their condition in America, the land of wealth and opportunity.

1. Freedom of speech is guaranteed by the First Amendment. Therefore, your friend was acting within his rights when he shouted “Fire! Fire!” in that crowded theater, even though it was only a joke.
 2. It is ridiculous to hear that man from Peru complaining about America’s poverty. Peru has twice as much poverty as America has ever had.
 3. Nobody has ever proved that immoral behavior by elected officials erodes public morality. Therefore, we must conclude that such behavior does not erode public morality.
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1. No one, on encountering a watch lying on a forest trail, would expect that it had simply appeared there without having been made by someone. For the same reason, no one should expect that the universe simply appeared without having been made by some being.
2. On Monday I drank ten rum and Cokes, and the next morning I woke up with a headache. On Wednesday I drank eight gin and Cokes, and the next morning I woke up with a headache. On Friday I drank nine bourbon and Cokes, and the next morning I woke up with a headache. Obviously, to prevent further headaches I must give up Coke.
3. Some of the parents in our school district have asked that we provide bilingual education in Spanish. This request will have to be denied. If we provide this service, then someone will ask for bilingual education in Greek. Then it will be German, French, and Hungarian. Polish, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean will follow close behind. We certainly can't accommodate all of them.

PART III

IDENTIFY THE FALLACIES OF ***PRESUMPTION***, ***AMBIGUITY***, AND ***ILLICIT TRANSFERENCE*** COMMITTED BY THE FOLLOWING ARGUMENTS, GIVING A BRIEF EXPLANATION FOR YOUR ANSWER. IF NO FALLACY IS COMMITTED, WRITE “**NO FALLACY.**”

1. Either we require forced sterilization of Third World peoples or the world population will explode and all of us will die. We certainly don't want to die, so we must require forced sterilization.
2. Every sentence in this paragraph is well written. Therefore, the paragraph is well written.
3. An athlete is a human being. Therefore, a good athlete is a good human being.

1. James said that he saw a picture of a beautiful girl stashed in Stephen's locker. We can only conclude that Stephen has broken the rules, because girls are not allowed in the locker room.
2. Why is it so difficult for you to reach a decision?
3. Water will quench one's thirst. Water is composed of hydrogen and oxygen. Therefore, hydrogen will quench one's thirst, and so will oxygen.

1. People who lack humility have no sense of beauty, because everyone who has a sense of beauty also has humility.
 2. Butane is combustible. Therefore, it burns.
 3. Twenty years ago, Kung Fong, the great sumo wrestler, could have yanked up one of the fir trees in the new municipal arboretum with a single pull. Therefore, since Mr. Fong is as strong today as he was then, he could just as easily pull up one of those trees today.
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1. If Thomas gives Marie a ring, then Thomas and Marie will be engaged. Thomas did give Marie a ring. In fact, he phoned her just the other night. Therefore, Thomas and Marie are engaged.
 2. Alex, I heard your testimony in court earlier today. Tell me, why did you lie on the witness stand?
 3. Johnson is employed by the General Services Administration, and everyone knows that the GSA is the most inefficient branch of the government. Therefore, Johnson must be an inefficient worker.
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1. All men are mortal. Therefore, someday man will disappear from the earth.
2. Each and every cell in this carrot is 90 percent water. Therefore, the entire carrot is 90 percent water.
3. George said that he was interviewing for a job drilling oil wells in the supervisor's office. We can only conclude that the supervisor must have an awfully dirty office.

1. During the fifty years that Mr. Jones worked, he contributed \$90,000 to Social Security. Now that he is retired, he stands to collect \$200,000 from the system. Obviously he will collect a much greater monetary value than he contributed.
 2. Either you marry me right now or I'll be forced to leave you and never speak to you again. I'm sure you wouldn't want me to do that. Therefore, you'll marry me right now.
 3. Either Meg Ryan or Britney Spears is a popular singer. Meg Ryan is not a popular singer. Therefore, Britney Spears is a popular singer
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1. Switzerland is 48 percent Protestant. Heidi Gilsing is a Swiss. Therefore, Heidi Gilsing is 48 percent Protestant.
2. An atomic bomb causes more damage than a conventional bomb. Therefore, during World War II more damage was caused by atomic bombs than by conventional bombs.
3. Sylvia, I saw you shopping for wine the other day. Incidentally, are you still drinking excessively?

1. The author warns about numerous computational errors in his accounting text. Therefore, he must have written it very carelessly.
2. Emeralds are seldom found in this country, so you should be careful not to misplace your emerald ring.
3. Of course abortion is permissible. After all, a woman has a right to do as she pleases with her own body.

ANSWER “TRUE” OR “FALSE” TO THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS:

1. Arguments that commit the fallacy of begging the question are normally valid.
2. The effect of begging the question is to hide the fact that a premise may not be true.
3. The correct way of responding to a complex question is to divide the question into its component questions and answer each separately.
4. False dichotomy always involves an “either . . . or . . .” statement, at least implicitly.
5. The fallacy of equivocation arises from a syntactical defect in a statement.
6. The fallacy of amphiboly usually involves the ambiguous use of a single word.
7. Amphiboly usually arises from the arguer’s misinterpreting a statement made by someone else.
8. The fallacy of composition always proceeds from whole to parts.
9. The fallacy of division always proceeds from parts to whole.
10. Composition and division involve the distributive predication of an