Summary of Informal Fallacies

Fallacy: a defect in an argument that arises from a mistake in reasoning or the creation of
an illusion that makes a bad argument appear good. there are two kinds of fallacy:
1. Formal fallacy: detectable by analyzing the form of an argument
2. Informal fallacy: detectable only by analyzing the content of an argument
A. Fallacies of relevance: the premises are not **logically** relevant to the conclusion:

1. **Appeal to force:** arguer threatens the reader/listener.
2. **Appeal to pity:** arguer elicits pity from the reader/listener.
3. **Appeal to the people**:

a) **direct form:** arguer incites a mob mentality e.g. appeal to fear,
b) **Indirect form:** appeals to our desire for security, love, or respect, etc.

I. **The bandwagon argument**: accept the conclusion otherwise you will be left behind or left out of the group.
II. **Appeal to vanity:** often associates the conclusion with someone who is admired, pursued, or imitated; the idea being that you, too, will be admired and pursued if you accept the conclusion.
III. **Appeal to snobbery**: the arguer often tries to make someone feel special just by accepting the conclusion.
IV. **Appeal to tradition:** the arguer cites the fact that something has become a tradition as grounds for some conclusion.

4. **Argument against the person**:
(a) *ad hominem* abusive arguer personally attacks an opposing arguer by verbally abusing the opponent, **(b) *ad hominen* circumstantial** presenting the opponent as predisposed to argue as he or she does, or **(c) *tu quoque*(you too)** by presenting the opponent as a hypocrite (). **Note:** For this fallacy to occur, there must be two arguers.
5. **Accident**: a general rule is applied to an exceptional case or to a specific case it was not intended to cover.
6. **Straw man:** arguer distorts an opponent's argument and then attacks the distorted
argument. **Note:** For this fallacy to occur, there must be two arguers.
7. **Missing the point**: arguer draws a conclusion different from the one supported by the
premises. **Note:** do not cite this fallacy if another fallacy fits.
8. **Red herring:** arguer leads the reader/listener off the track.

B. Fallacies of Weak induction: the premises may be relevant to the conclusion, but they
supply insufficient support for the conclusion:

9. **Appeal to unqualified authority:** arguer cites an untrustworthy authority.
10. **Appeal to ignorance**: Premises report that nothing is known or proved about some
subject, and then a conclusion is drawn about that subject.
11. **Hasty generalization:** a general conclusion is drawn from an atypical sample.
12.**False cause:** conclusion depends on a nonexistent or minor causal connection. this fallacy has four forms:

a) Post hoc ergo propter hoc: just because one event precedes another event, the first event causes the second.

b) Non causa pro causa: what is taken to be the cause of something is not really the cause at all.

c) Oversimplified cause: the arguer selects just one cause among a multitude of causes and represents it as if it were the sole cause.

d) The gambler's fallacy: conclusion depends on the supposition that independent events in a game of chance are causally related.
13. **Slippery slope:** conclusion depends on an unlikely chain reaction of causes.
14. **Weak analogy**: conclusion depends on a defective analogy (similarity).
C. Fallacies of Presumption: the premises presume what they purport to prove:
15. **Begging the question**: arguer creates the illusion that inadequate premises are adequate
by leaving out a key premise, restating the conclusion as a premise, or reasoning in a circle.
16. **Complex question**: multiple questions are concealed in a single question which presumes the existence of a certain condition.
17. **False dichotomy**: an "either . . . or . . ." premise hides additional alternatives.
18. **Suppressed evidence**: arguer ignores important evidence that requires a different
conclusion.
D. Fallacies of ambiguity: the conclusion depends on some kind of linguistic ambiguity:
19. **Equivocation:** conclusion depends on a shift in meaning of a word or phrase.
20. **Amphiboly:** conclusion depends on an incorrect interpretation of an ambiguous
statement made by someone other than the arguer.

E. **Fallacies of illicit transference**(**grammatical analogy**): an attribute is incorrectly transferred from the parts of something onto the whole or from

the whole onto the parts:
21.**Composition**: an attribute is incorrectly transferred from the parts to the whole.
22. **Division** : an attribute is incorrectly transferred from the whole to the parts.

Composition (*proceeds from the members of the class to the class itself).* ***Vs. Hasty generalization*** *(proceeds from the specific to the general.)*

Division *(proceeds from the class to the members) vs.* ***Accident*** *(proceeds from the general to*
the specific.)

Fleas are small is a general statement and the attribute of being small is predicated distributively.
Fleas are numerous is a class statement and the attribute of being numerous is predicated collectively.

Fallacies that occur in real-life argumentation may be hard to detect:

a)they may not exactly fit the pattern of the named fallacies.
b)they may involve two or more fallacies woven together in a single passage.

Three factors underlie the commission of fallacies in real-life argumentation:

1. the intent of the arguer (the arguer may intend to mislead someone).
2. mental carelessness combined with unchecked emotions.
3. unexamined presuppositions in the arguer’s worldview.