

**LEARNING STRATEGIES:**

Discussion Groups, Quickwrite

**ACADEMIC VOCABULARY**

**Fallacies** are false or misleading arguments.

My Notes

## Learning Targets

- Identify fallacious logic, appeals, and rhetoric in sample texts.
- Use logical fallacies and refute the fallacies of others in a debate.

## Identifying Fallacies

1. You will be given a set of card manipulatives, some of which will contain the names of specific types of **fallacies**, while others will contain the definitions. In your small group, you will need to match the fallacies with their definitions.
2. Next, read through the following informational text and check your answers.

## Types of Fallacies

**Fallacies** are commonplace in advertising, political discourse, and everyday conversations—and they will continue to be as long as they work to persuade. By learning to recognize them when you see them, you can strip away their power. There are many different ways to categorize fallacies, and many different names for the various types. The following eleven fallacies (adapted from Brooke Noel Moore and Richard Parker’s *Critical Thinking*, 8th ed., 2007) are divided into the different types of offense they represent. Learn these and you’ll be ready to see through many of the rhetorical scams that come your way each day.

### Logical Fallacies: Errors in Reasoning

- **Hasty generalization:** The leap to a generalized conclusion based on only a few instances. For example, on a trip to Paris you meet several rude Parisians, leading you to conclude that French people are rude.
- **Post hoc:** Literally meaning “after this,” it’s a causal fallacy in which a person assumes one thing caused another simply because it happened prior to the other. For instance, the high school soccer team loses an important game the day after they start wearing new uniforms. The coach blames the loss on the new uniforms.

### Emotive Fallacies: Replacing Logic With Emotional Manipulation

- **Ad populum:** Literally meaning “argument” from popularity; refers to a variety of appeals that play on the association of a person or subject with values that are held by members of a target group (think of images of the flag in ads playing on patriotism) or the suggestion that “everybody knows” that something is true (as with bandwagoning).
- **“Argument” from outrage:** Aristotle said that if you understand what makes a man angry, you can use that anger to persuade him to accept a position without critically evaluating it. This fallacy is the backbone of talk radio and of political rhetoric on both extremes of the political spectrum. It often employs loaded language and labels. It also includes scapegoating—blaming a certain group of people or even a single person.



# Fallacies 101

## My Notes

### Fallacy Face Off

1. As a class, select a current, high-profile, controversial issue. Feel free to pull this topic from some of your recent newspaper readings. You will use this topic in a **mock debate**.
2. Next, split into teams. Within each team, each team member will select or be assigned a fallacious appeal to use regarding the selected topic.
3. When the teams are ready, they will use these fallacious appeals in a mock debate. Each team will take turns presenting their appeals to the class as if presenting at a public rally, televised debate, or other venue of the class's choosing.
4. As other groups present their arguments, you will be responsible for identifying and challenging the nature of the fallacy being used by the speaker.

### Check Your Understanding

After exploring these fallacies in class, discuss the following questions in your small group:

- Why are fallacies so common in our political discourse? Which ones are most common and why?
- Why are fallacies so powerful—and so dangerous?
- Why might you choose to use a fallacy—or rhetorical slanters—in a letter or speech? What would be the pros and cons of doing so?
- How does the use of fallacies affect the ethos of a writer or speaker?
- What is the relationship between considering your audience and deciding whether to use fallacious appeals or slanters?

**Revision Writing Prompt:** Review the letter to the editor that you wrote in the last activity and revise it using at least one of the types of fallacy from this activity. Share your revision with a partner and ask him or her to identify the type of fallacy you used in your writing. Be sure to:

- Revise your letter to clearly state your position, if needed.
- Incorporate at least one fallacy into your letter.
- Prepare your letter in final draft, checking that it is grammatically and technically accurate. As needed, consult references to ensure that you are spelling and using words correctly.