

## Teaching Lesson Guide: Fallacies of Relevance, Personal Attacks, and Common Experiences When Arguing

1. The term *fallacies of relevance* refers to an argument in which the premises prove logically irrelevant to the conclusion. This argument consists of an emotional appeal. Fallacies of insufficient evidence means that the premises fail to provide evidence to support the conclusion, even though they do command a relevance to the conclusion. It shows a fault of reason rather than the reliance on an emotional appeal that is found in a fallacy of relevance.
  - a. A statement with positive relevance to another statement: John is a man. Most men like sports. Therefore, John must like sports.
  - b. A statement with negative relevance to another statement: Sherry is an adult with a job. Therefore, Sherry is probably a billionaire.
  - c. A statement that is irrelevant to another statement: Diamonds are beautiful. Every American deserves a diamond.
  
2. A personal attack rejects the claim of an argument because it attacks the person making the argument. But not all of these are fallacies because if one made an argument about why one should not use a known, habitual liar as a witness, that fact would have to be brought up even though it does attack the character of that person rather than his or her claims. Attacking the motives means that a person attacks why someone is making an argument instead of the validity of the argument.
  - a. A personal attack fallacy: John is a habitual drug user. His account of that night cannot be trusted.
  - b. Attacking the motive fallacy: Carol makes a great case for firing Donny. But she is next in line for his job so it makes sense she made that argument.
  
3. Here are other common experiences with arguments:
  - a. Look who's talking amounts to, "Practice what you preach!", i.e., when a friend tells you to take care of yourself, yet that friend smokes.
  - b. Two wrongs make a right happens when a person says one wrong is okay because another wrong is worse. An example of this is when a co-worker claims it is okay to steal from the register because the manager does.
  - c. Scare tactics happen when using a threat to convince the other person. For example, "If you do not vote for me, you will wind up losing your job."
  - d. A red herring means that someone raises another issue without addressing the first one. An example of this is when a politician says that first issue has been addressed and/or solved. The politician will answer a question about giving every citizen free

healthcare then switch to talking about how they accomplished something else in healthcare, ending the argument as if everything has been answered and resolved.

### **Other Considerations:**

#### **The Bandwagon Argument, the Straw Man Argument, and the Appeal to Pity**

1. The following examples show the bandwagon argument, the straw man argument, and the appeal to pity:
  - a. Everyone who's anyone is doing keto so you should do it, too. (This means "jumping on the bandwagon.")
  - b. Johnny is always going on about how corporations should pay more in taxes. It is obvious that he believes in communism because he thinks companies should pay high taxes and make no profit whatsoever. (This is an example of the strawman which relies on exaggeration and distortion to make the arguer look bad or incapable.)
  - c. If you do not go with me to the dance, it will mean that my whole year is bad and that is not a good way to get into college. (An appeal to pity relies on emotion and it has nothing to do with the issue at hand.)