Logical Fallacies
Contributor: Derrian Goebel

When considering your argument or the arguments of others, writers and readers need to be aware of logical fallacies. Logical fallacies are found in many places—ads, politics, movies. Logical fallacies make an argument weak by using mistaken beliefs/ideas, invalid arguments, illogical arguments, and/or deceptiveness. If you are arguing, avoid fallacies of thought because they create weaknesses in an argument. Here are some of the most common fallacies to be aware of.

Ad hominem
- Attacking one’s character rather than the issue; an insult is not addressing the concern.
- Does your reason for arguing stand on solid ground, or are you just insulting the opponent?
  - Address sandwich quality, not the boy who brought it up.

Appeal to False Authority
- Using a source quote from someone who is not an expert in the field.
- Who qualifies as an “expert”?
- Are there credentials for your “expert”?
- Do you/they have the authority?
- Is your/their source biased?
  - Oprah is not a medical doctor, therefore not the “expert” on digestion.

Bandwagon Fallacy
- When evidence merely says that the reasoning is because others do or like it, you are not providing solid evidence.
- Who is “everyone”?
- Are they really “all” thinking the same way?
  - Just because everyone has a cell phone, doesn’t mean that everyone needs a cell phone.

Begging the Question/Circular Reasoning
- Affirming the claim in a circular manner that essentially supports itself.
- Is your claim supported by something other than its own concept?
  - Game of Thrones TV show is the best ever because it is awesome!
Either/Or Fallacy
- Reducing complex arguments to simply right/wrong
- There are more than two sides to arguments.
- Ask yourself if someone can come up with an alternative?
  - Not everyone loves bacon.

Faulty Analogy
- Comparing things that are similar in some ways, but not where it matters most.
- Using a metaphor can support a claim, but are the parts of your metaphor connected? If not, your argument will fall apart.
  - Comparing apples to oranges is not useful to your argument on apple quality.

Faulty Causality
- Drawing the conclusion that when two events happen close together one has caused the other.
- Has event A caused event B, or did it just happen at the same time?
  - When I bring my lucky dolls, my team wins the game!

Hasty Generalization
- Making a claim based on one or two examples that may not be relevant to the claims or subject.
- Does every single American like it, really?
  - Using “all the time” and “all Americans like…”

Slippery Slope
- Arguments that proclaim that one incident will start a chain of events leading to devastating results.
- Are your claims over-reaching or exaggerated?
- Aren’t always completely off base, but usually inaccurate and blown out of proportion.
  - Potlucks do not lead to socialism.

Vagueness, Evasions, Misstatements
- Vagueness is simply lies in truth’s clothing.
- Misstatements often take a quote out of context to “prove” a point.
- Are you clearly interpreting the information/evidence?
- A misstatement would suggest that “billions” of people are happy with the product just because billions were served the product.