

FALLACIES IN PROPAGANDA AND FAKE NEWS

Propaganda and fake news often rely on logical fallacies to manipulate audiences. Here are some key fallacies to watch for:

Kind of Argument	What is it?
Appeal to Emotion	<p>Using fear, anger, or patriotism rather than evidence-based reasoning to persuade people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Party uses the “Two Minutes Hate” sessions to stir up intense anger and hatred toward Emmanuel Goldstein, the supposed enemy of Oceania.• “Certain books should be banned because they make people feel bad about their country.”
Ad Hominem	<p>Attacking a person's character instead of addressing their argument.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• During Winston’s interrogation, O’Brien dismisses Winston’s concerns by calling him a “lunatic” and “a minority of one,” avoiding Winston’s arguments about truth and reality and undermining him as an individual instead.• A student dismisses another student’s opinion of a novel by saying, “You’re just saying that because you’re bad at analyzing literature.”
False Dilemma / False Dichotomy	<p>Presenting only two options when many exist, forcing an artificial choice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Party creates a false dichotomy declaring that Oceania is perpetually at war with either Eurasia or Eastasia, leading citizens to believe that war is necessary for peace and stability, ignoring the possibility of alternatives like diplomacy or peace without conflict.• A student says, “You either join the drama club or you’ll have no social life,” ignoring other ways to make friends.

Kind of Argument	What is it?
Hasty Generalization	<p data-bbox="435 323 1360 357">Drawing broad conclusions from insufficient evidence or small samples.</p> <ul data-bbox="483 394 1419 583" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="483 394 1419 470">• Winston considers how citizens accept the Party's propaganda without question, which are often based on limited or manipulated data. <li data-bbox="483 472 1419 583">• A student claims, "Everyone at school hated that movie!" after hearing negative opinions from just a few classmates, without considering broader perspectives.
Cherry Picking	<p data-bbox="435 661 1282 737">Selectively presenting facts that support a position while ignoring contradictory evidence.</p> <ul data-bbox="483 774 1399 1039" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="483 774 1399 921">• The Party manipulates historical records to show only the evidence that supports their narrative, such as claiming Oceania has always been at war with Eastasia while erasing any evidence of prior alliances. <li data-bbox="483 924 1399 1039">• A student campaigning for Student Council might highlight their involvement in successful school events while ignoring their poor attendance record or failed initiatives.
Bandwagon Fallacy	<p data-bbox="435 1117 1393 1192">Suggesting something is true or good because it's popular or many people believe it.</p> <ul data-bbox="483 1230 1414 1377" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="483 1230 1414 1297">• Citizens are pressured to conform to the Party's beliefs because "everyone else" believes them. <li data-bbox="483 1299 1414 1377">• A student might argue that a particular trend, like wearing a specific brand, is the best because "everyone is doing it."
Straw Man	<p data-bbox="435 1495 1307 1528">Misrepresenting an opponent's position to make it easier to attack.</p> <ul data-bbox="483 1566 1440 1793" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="483 1566 1440 1675">• The Party portrays Goldstein as advocating chaos and destruction, exaggerating his supposed beliefs to justify their oppressive policies and vilify dissent. <li data-bbox="483 1677 1440 1793">• In a debate about school uniforms, one student might claim, "You just want everyone to wear whatever they want, even pajamas!", misrepresenting an opponents' argument for relaxed dress codes.

Kind of Argument	What is it?
Appeal to Authority	Using endorsements from "experts" (sometimes fake or misrepresented) rather than evidence.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Party uses Big Brother's supposed omniscience as an unquestionable authority to validate their propaganda. • A student asserts that a particular study method is the best because a popular influencer has endorsed it.
Post Hoc Fallacy	Assuming that because one event followed another, the first caused the second.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Party claims that increased rations are due to their policies, even though there is no causal link between their governance and economic improvements. • "I failed my math test because I skipped breakfast!", suggesting that not eating was the cause rather than other reasons, like not studying.
Slippery Slope	Claiming one small step will inevitably lead to extreme negative consequences.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Party warns that questioning their authority will lead to complete societal collapse and chaos, discouraging any dissent. • A teacher warns, "If we let students chew gum in class, next thing you know they'll be bringing snacks and throwing full-on pizza parties during lectures!"

Kind of Argument	What is it?
False Equivalence	<p>Treating two unequal positions as if they were equally valid or comparable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Party equates Winston's private thoughts with treason, treating his quiet dissent as though it were as dangerous as outright rebellion. This false equivalence justifies their extreme punishments. • A student argues, "Not doing your homework is just as bad as skipping school entirely," equating two actions with vastly different consequences.
Whataboutism	<p>Deflecting criticism by pointing to someone else's behavior rather than addressing the issue.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When citizens question the Party's policies, they are reminded of the atrocities supposedly committed by Goldstein and other "enemies," deflecting attention away from the Party's own failings. • When a teacher calls out a student for talking during class, the student responds, "But what about Sarah? She was texting five minutes ago!"
Circular Reasoning	<p>Making an argument where the conclusion is included in the premise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Party claims that Big Brother is infallible because he controls all truth, and since he controls all truth, he must be infallible—a circular argument that reinforces their propaganda. • A student says, "I'm the best player on the team because I'm better than everyone else," without providing any evidence beyond repeating the claim.

Statements adapted from a list generated by the AI tool Claude.

Anthropic. (2025). Claude (Opus 4) [Large language model]. [Claude.AI](#)

