

Evaluating an Argument

The ability to evaluate arguments to determine their credibility involves analysis and critical thinking. Understanding the difference between facts and opinions and arguments, and arguments based on logical fallacies can help you improve your reading comprehension.

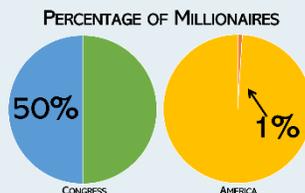
Topics for Evaluating an Argument

Facts vs. Opinions

Fact: information that can be proven or disproven.

Example of a Fact:

50% of politicians in the U.S. Congress are millionaires while only 1% of U.S. citizens are millionaires.



Opinion: a claim without supporting evidence

Example of an Opinion:

The New York Yankees is the best team in the history of Major League Baseball. (claim without evidence)

Opinions vs. Arguments

Assumption: an unstated and unproven belief

Argument: a claim with supporting evidence

Example of an Argument:

The New York Yankees is the best team in the history of Major League Baseball because it has won more world series titles than any other team. (claim + evidence)

Logical Fallacies

Logical Fallacy: an error in reasoning based on poor or faulty logic

Not all arguments are created equal. Some arguments are better supported than others. When evaluating an argument, think about how compelling the evidence is. Is it relevant? Is it persuasive? Is it logical? Sometimes, an argument is poorly supported because it is based on a logical fallacy.

Straw Man Fallacy	Taking someone's argument and distorting or exaggerating it, then attacking the distortion as if it were the original claim.
False Dilemma Fallacy	Presenting only two options or sides when there are many options or sides.
Hasty Generalization Fallacy	Making a claim based on evidence that is too small.
Appeal to Fear Fallacy	Appealing to people's fears by presenting a scary future if a certain decision is made today.
Ad Hominem Fallacy	Ad hominem means "against the man." This fallacy occurs when someone attacks the person instead of his or her argument.
Slippery Slope Fallacy	Claiming that an action or decision will lead to other terrible events that build up to an awful conclusion.
Bandwagon Fallacy	Convincing people to do or think something because everyone else does.
Guilt by Association Fallacy	Connecting an opponent to a demonized group or bad person to discredit his or her argument.