

speakers to be sure that they aren't reaching premature conclusions or conclusions based on flimsy evidence.

Here are **seven** common logical fallacies.

1. When **begging the question**, speakers assume the truth or falsity of a statement without supplying proof. They simply state their ideas, taking for granted that you'll agree. Politicians and advertisers use this technique. "Vote for me because I served this district better than any other Congressman," or "Beef is good for you because it's meat from the cow" are examples of begging the question.
2. In **card stacking**, speakers select only the evidence and arguments for the side that they support. The term refers to a deck of cards used by someone doing card tricks. The evidence is arranged so skillfully and with such sleight of hand that it looks like the speaker has performed magic, and he or she has—on you!
3. When speaking on **false premises**, speakers begin with false assumptions that you assume are true. Listen for a speaker's premises. If the premises are false, everything that follows will be shaky. For example, since volleyball is the most important school sport, then it should receive the largest share of the school athletic budget.
4. When speakers use vague or general words or phrases that express an attitude or idea that has popular support, they are using **glittering generalities**. By doing so, they try to make you accept something by
5. When speakers don't have enough evidence to support a broad conclusion, or when they selectively leave out details and come to a quick conclusion, they are making **false generalizations**. This type of faulty reasoning is common. Say that you saw a baseball player play in two games, and he didn't get a hit. Your hasty generalization might be to say that he can't hit. Words such as *everyone*, *always*, *never*, and *nobody* may indicate that a generalization is lurking nearby.
6. In a **non sequitur**, speakers assert something that doesn't follow logically or that deals with a totally different subject. The term *non sequitur* means "doesn't follow" in Latin. A recent sales pitch claims, "I'm 41, I'm in great shape, and I can tell you this exercise equipment really works." Being in great shape at age 41 is not necessarily connected to the weight machine.
7. For a **testimonial**, speakers use an authority or a well-known person to endorse a particular subject or position to gain the listener's approval. Nike hired basketball star Michael Jordan to appear in its commercials so that people would associate Nike footwear with Michael Jordan and his athletic ability. If Michael Jordan endorses a product, people believe that it is good.

Identifying Propaganda

Watching for propaganda is another important critical-listening skill. **Propaganda** is a form of persuasion that discourages listeners from making an independent choice. Propagandists state their positions or opinions as though these are accepted truths, without evidence to back their claims. Propaganda tries to create an emotional response that will make people believe and act rather than think.

Propagandists use techniques for spreading information to either advance or destroy a cause. **Six** common propaganda techniques are:

1. **Transfer** makes an illogical connection between unrelated things. Advertisers use this technique so that viewers will associate their products with positive, appealing, or desirable things.
2. Jumping on a **bandwagon** means joining a group in favor of some person, product, or idea. Since "everyone else" is doing it, it's the correct thing to do. The assumption is that a listener will follow the crowd.
3. When speakers use a negative term to refer to a group or an idea—like calling someone a liar or a cheat without giving any evidence or proof—they're guilty of **name calling**. Attacking an opponent rather than an idea or position changes a discussion to one of personalities rather than issues.

4. Language that evokes strong feelings and attitudes in the listener can sway an argument. **Loaded words** have a particular slant and rely on the connotative meanings the listener shares. **Emotional appeals** assume that you share the emotional responses of the speaker.
5. **Stereotypes** are preconceived notions about a person based on his or her membership in a group. These are shortcut ways of thinking about an individual. They often involve a prejudice.
6. Posing arguments as **either/or** choices fails to take into account third or fourth possibilities. This creates drama but doesn't always explain the whole picture.

