



Comm Skills Virtual Learning

Debate I &

Adv Competitive Debate

Logical Fallacies - Begging the Question

May 08, 2020



Lesson: May 8, 2020

**Objective/Learning Target:
Define, identify, and refute logical fallacies.**

Bell Ringer/Let's Get Started

Watch this [video](#) about Begging the Question with The Simpson's.

Have you ever been in a debate round and experienced “Begging the Question”?

Lesson/Activity: Begging the Question

A fallacy is a false or mistaken idea.

A logical fallacy is an error in reasoning or a false assumption.

Identifying logical fallacies in debate can help shorten the time it takes to come up with a response to your opponent. It can also make you sound really smart if you can label the logical fallacy your opponent is using. Finally, learning about logical fallacies can help *you* not use them during a debate.

Today, we will explore Begging the Question. The next several slides will show a definition and an example of Begging the Question.

Begging the Question - definition and form

You might find this [video](#) helpful in understanding Begging the Question.

Begging the Question definition: Any form of argument where the conclusion is assumed in one of the premises. Many people use the phrase “begging the question” incorrectly when they use it to mean, “prompts one to ask the question”. That is NOT the correct usage.

Begging the question is a form of circular reasoning. (Bennett, Bo. “Logically Fallacious.” *Logically Fallacious*, www.logicallyfallacious.com/)

Logical Form of Begging the Question:

- Claim X assumes X is true.
- Therefore, claim X is true.

Begging the Question - examples

Example #1: *Paranormal activity is real because I have experienced what can only be described as paranormal activity.*

Explanation: The claim, “paranormal activity is real” is supported by the premise, “I have experienced what can only be described as paranormal activity.” The premise presupposes, or assumes, that the claim, “paranormal activity is real” is already true.

Example #2: *The reason everyone wants the new "Slap Me Silly Elmo" doll is because this is the hottest toy of the season!*

Explanation: Everyone wanting the toy is the same thing as it being "hot," so the reason given is no reason at all—it is simply rewording the claim and trying to pass it off as support for the claim.

Exception: Some assumptions that are universally accepted could pass as not being fallacious. *People like to eat because we are biologically influenced to eat.*

Reference:

Walton, D. N., & Fallacy, A. A. P. (1991). *Begging the Question.*

Begging the Question - example

Examples:

1. Everyone wants the new iPhone because it is the hottest new gadget on the market!
2. (omitted)
3. Killing people is wrong, so the death penalty is wrong.
4. Smoking cigarettes can kill you because cigarettes are deadly.
5. The rights of the criminal are just as important as the rights of the victim. Everyone's rights are equal.
6. Fruits and vegetables are part of a healthy diet. After all, a healthy eating plan includes fruits and vegetables.
7. Student: Why didn't I receive full credit on my essay? Teacher: Because your paper did not meet the requirements for full credit.
8. The greatest thing we can do is to love each other. Love is better than any other emotion.

(Source: https://www.softschools.com/examples/fallacies/begging_the_question_examples/489/)

Begging the Question - refutation

Before refuting, remember the logical form of Begging the Question:

- Claim X assumes X is true.
- Therefore, claim X is true.

Refuting Begging the Question:

1. Point out that your opponent is Begging the Question.
2. Draw a conclusion. Either:
 - a. Show that claim X is NOT true.
 - b. If it would be difficult to show that Claim X is NOT true, then show that your opponent has not proven their assertion definitively without relying on presumption.

Practice - Begging the Question

Think about one of your debate topics this year.

What was a common Begging the Question situation you found yourself in?

Write an example of Begging the Question that follows the logical form.

Now, use the refutation tips to refute that argument.

Additional Resources

[WIRELESS PHILOSOPHY](#)

Explore [MORE](#) fallacies