



Comm Skills Virtual Learning

Debate I &

Adv Competitive Debate

Logical Fallacies - Straw Man

May 05, 2020



Lesson: May 5, 2020

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

Bell Ringer/Let's Get Started

You are debater 1. What is your response to Debater 2?

Debater 1: I am advocating for a policy that would reduce the amount of weapons we sell to Israel.

Debater 2: My opponent wants to stop fighting the war on terrorism by disarming Israel. We can never stop fighting terrorism.

Debater 1: _____

Lesson/Activity: The Straw Man Fallacy

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 the Straw Man Fallacy. The next several slides will show a definition and an example of the Straw Man Fallacy.

The Straw Man Fallacy - definition and form

If you prefer Khan Academy, you might also watch their Straw Man Fallacy [video](#).

Straw Man Fallacy definition: Substituting a person's actual position or argument with a distorted, exaggerated, or misrepresented version of the position or the argument (Bennett, Bo. "Logically Fallacious." *Logically Fallacious*, www.logicallyfallacious.com/)

Logical Form of Straw Man:

- *Person 1 makes claim Y.*
- *Person 2 restates person 1's claim (in a distorted way).*
- *Person 2 attacks the distorted version of the claim.*
- *Therefore, claim Y is false.*

The Straw Man Fallacy - example

Example:

Person 1 makes claim Y.

Biological evolution is both a theory and a fact.

Person 2 restates person 1's claim (in a distorted way).

You believe we evolved from pond scum. That is ridiculous!

Person 2 attacks the distorted version of the claim.

We can't be absolutely certain that we evolved from pond scum.

Therefore, claim Y is false.

Therefore, biological evolution has been disproven.

The Straw Man Fallacy - refutation

When refuting or countering the Straw Man Fallacy in debate, you might choose one of these approaches:

1. Point out the Straw Man.
 - a. Explain how your opponent distorted your argument.
 - b. Ask your opponent to justify why their distortion of your argument is the same as the argument you actually made.
2. Ignore the Straw Man.
 - a. Ignore the distortion and continue to make your point. The time it takes to address the argument might be better spent reasserting your argument.
 - b. If the opponent continues with their distortion, you should choose to address it directly.
3. Accept the Straw Man.
 - a. If your opponent's Straw Man can be defended, then you could choose to accept the fallacy, showing you win the argument either way.

Practice - Straw Man Fallacy

Think about one of your debate topics this year.

What was a common Straw Man fallacy you or your opponents made?

Write an example of a Straw Man argument that follows the logical form.

Now, use the refutation tips to refute that argument.

Additional Resources

[WIRELESS PHILOSOPHY](#)

[STRAW MAN FROM KHAN ACADEMY](#)

Explore [MORE](#) fallacies