**Writing Centre**

**AVOIDING COMMON ERRORS IN LOGIC AND REASONING**

The goal of writers is to present original ideas and convince readers that these ideas are valid by presenting well-reasoned and organized arguments.

In order to convince a reader successfully, you must clearly present your **thesis**—the main idea that you want to explore or defend. Explain your **premises**—the reasons why you believe the main statement is true, and provide relevant **evidence**to demonstrate that each of your premises are reasonable.

When you break down the parts of a paper into these 3 things: **thesis, premises**, and **evidence**, creating an argument sounds deceptively easy. In practice, however, it can be difficult to judge whether you have communicated a logical defense of your ideas. Once you have been working on an essay for a while, you can get so caught up in the details that it becomes impossible to see the argument as a whole or recognize gaps or errors in your reasoning.

Here are some tips to avoid errors in logic and reasoning:

1. Student writers frequently weaken their arguments when they rely on **unstated or invalid assumptions**. An assumption is a statement or idea that you accept as true without proof or demonstration. **Therefore, provide proof for all arguments.**
2. Among these assumptions, stated and unstated, are those that are based on personal **prejudices or stereotypes**. **Avoid prejudices and stereotypes, no matter how popular or true you may think they are***.*
3. An error in reasoning, similar to making an unstated or invalid assumption occurs when a writer employs an **unsupported assertion** to support their idea. An assertion is a declaration stated positively, but with no support or proof.
4. Student writers can make similar errors when they **suppress** or provide **incomplete evidence**. **Always support ideas with thorough evidence.**
5. Another common logical error is circular reasoning. Student writers can fall into the trap of **circular reasoning** when their belief in their idea is both the starting point and the goal of their argument. **Begin with an initial idea which is different than your main idea, but will also lead directly into supporting your main argument***.*
6. When student writers defend an opinion or a controversial thesis, they sometimes inappropriately try to persuade their readers by **appealing to emotions** instead of composing a careful, reasoned argument. **Avoid emotional persuasion.**

1. Student writers also need to be careful to avoid **false or faulty analogies**. Analogies are comparisons, and writers can use them to illustrate points, but not to replace arguments. **Avoid excessive use of, or debatable analogies.**

**Sources:**

[web.princeton.edu](http://web.princeton.edu/sites/writing/Writing_Center/Handouts/logic&reason.pdf)

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