

HANDBOOK
FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

**Critical
Thinking
Skills**

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Project Summary

Citizen's competence is of crucial importance for active political participation, which is one of the main components of good governance and sustainable democracy. Especially in the Eastern part of the Danube region, political participation is stagnating. Particularly worrisome are the apathy and lack of political interest on the side of younger population. Furthermore, in the last years, we witness political developments that result in deterioration of democratic standards in many parts of the region. The core element of the citizen's competence is high level of media literacy. It is necessary for citizens' reflection of social reality and their resilience to negative media phenomena, like hate speech and fake news.

The main objective of the project is to improve democratic transnational governance by developing a transnational media literacy observatory, based on cooperation between different relevant stakeholders. In many countries of the Danube region the development of competences of media literacy and active citizenship are far behind more developed parts of Europe. This observatory will serve as a mechanism for increasing media literacy and thus strengthening citizens' competences what will contribute to development of sustainable democracy. The main target groups are the youth and the people who work with them. For the purpose of strengthening it, the observatory will provide tools, available for both young people as well as their educators.

The project will establish an observatory for media literacy that will provide instruments for scrutinising media contents, training tools and policy recommendations for upgrading media literacy in relation with other civic skills. Outputs include: capacity building and training tools, web-based interface and policy recommendations. The core activities of the project are: mapping of practices and dissemination of information, developing learning system, designing web training platforms, and pilot testing.

How to work with this Handbook and interactive presentation

Dear students,

this handbook serves as a guide for an interactive presentation on the topic of „Critical Thinking Skills“.

Open the interactive presentation in a new window of your browser. If you work independently, open it on your computer, or you can project it on an interactive whiteboard.

To work with the presentation, open or print this document.

The presentation contains several slides (presentation slides) with teaching material and visual content. Read and view each slide carefully. If you see an “i” icon on the slide in the lower left corner, click on it. Under it, there is additional information or examples that will help you better understand the issue.

Some slides have interactive elements in addition to the „i“ button. These elements are highlighted. When you click on them, you will learn more information (there can for example an audio sample, video or additional information). You will also find an audio icon in the presentation. Some slides contain sound. If necessary, you can click on the sound icon to mute or reactivate the sound in the presentation.

Click on the right arrow for the next slide. If you want to go back in the presentation, click on the left arrow. To go back to the very beginning of the presentation, click on the house icon.

For better orientation in the text, individual slides are gradually displayed with additional educational material and further expansion of teaching.

The text is interspersed with **definitions**, because you come across some terms for the first time and it is advisable to remember them. Also pay attention to the **Interesting facts**.

Caption to the texts in the handbook:



INTERESTING FACT



DEFINITIONS

Introduction to the lesson

People often perceive the online world as one of the main sources of information that significantly shapes their world view. They simplify information, they tend to stereotypes and abbreviations, which often force them to interpret things in a way that confirms their own beliefs and world views.

Critical thinking is a combination of words that are used more and more often in the field of media and education in various cases. What can we imagine under this term and how to make us think critically? Strengthening critical thinking is essential to maintaining common sense in evaluating information, including politically related information.

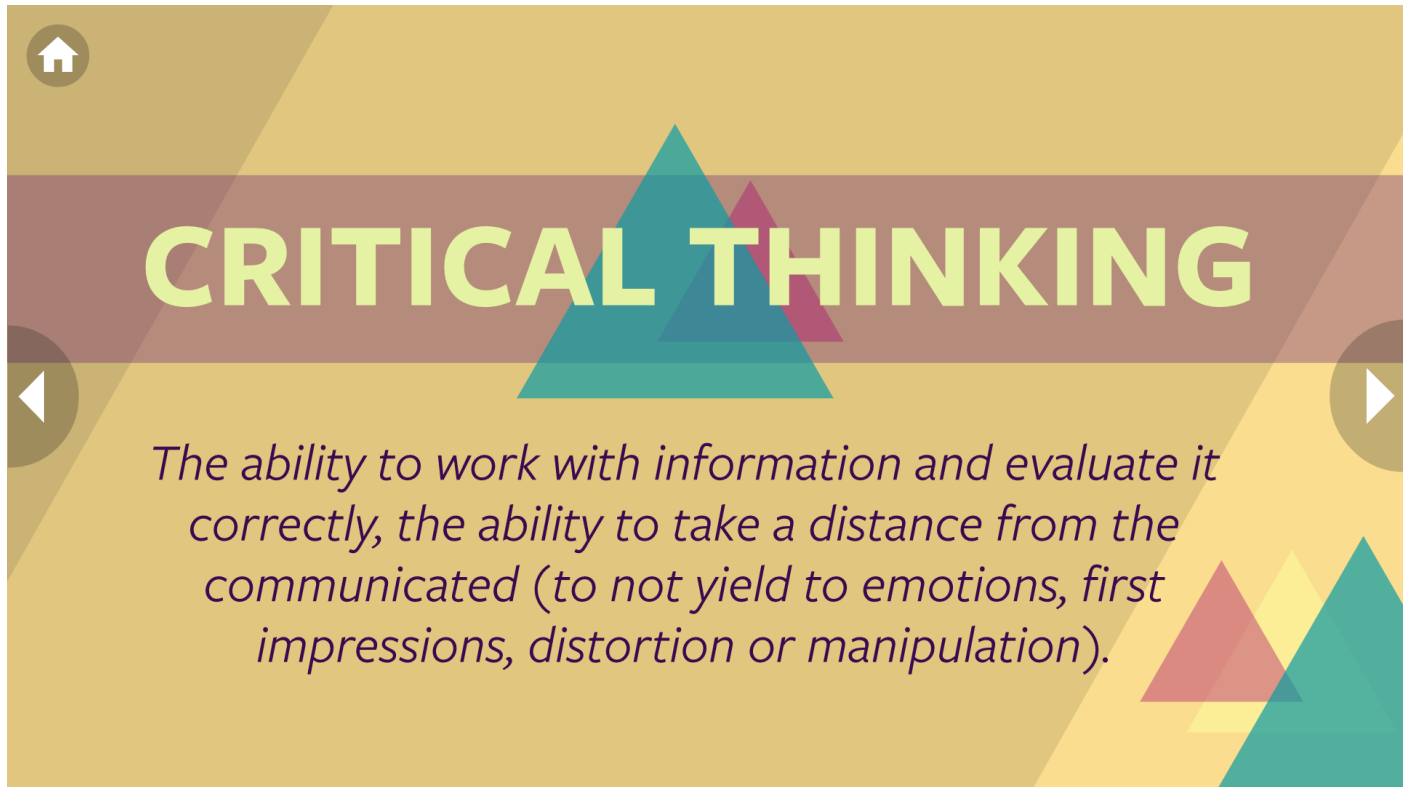
You will learn what are cognitive distortions and logical fallacies, what is critical thinking and what is beneficial for it and what is not. In the second part of the presentation, you will practice the information obtained on specific examples.

Critical thinking

We must pay more attention to who is telling us the truth and who is just trying to make the words look like the truth.

On the slide we will learn about the critical thinking. **What does it mean?**

Look for the answer on the slide.



Remember: Critical thinking doesn't mean we should criticize anyone.

We need to **be critical** of media content and try **to see if through** a particular blogger, singer or politician is just playing a strange game on us.

The Dunning-Kruger effect

Read on the slide what the Dunning-Kruger effect is.
Think about the first sentence in quotes.

„If I don't have a lot of information/knowledge about a certain topic, I have no idea what I don't know yet“

Research proved that people who do not have sufficient knowledge/skills in a certain field tend to overestimate their results (they are confident). On the contrary, educated people tend to underestimate themselves.

This phenomenon is called **the Dunning-Kruger effect**.
Authors are David Dunning and Justin Kruger.

If I don't have enough information or knowledge about a topic (for example, when talking to my parents about politics), I can't know what I don't know yet.

Therefore, information needs to be evaluated, both general and political.
If a politician on the news is explaining a position or advocacy to you, you need to listen well to the style in which he or she presents the information.
In the following slides you will learn how we can be manipulated.

What are Cognitive distortions

Describe women on the slide - what are their characteristics, interests, professions...

Which one would you prefer as an instructor on a ski course or as a camp leader? Why?

The slide features a green header with the title 'Cognitive distortions' in yellow. Below the header are two side-by-side photographs. The left photo shows a woman in a white blouse and dark skirt looking at a tablet held by a man in a grey suit. The right photo shows a woman with glasses, wearing a white tank top and blue jeans, sitting on a couch, smoking a cigarette, and holding a glass of wine. The slide also includes a home icon in the top left, a left arrow in the middle left, a right arrow in the middle right, and an information icon in the bottom left.

The brain can convince us of something that is not true. Look at the definition in the info button, what cognitive distortions are and what it means in practice.

Cognitive distortions

Cognitive distortions = *unconsciously formed erroneous beliefs that we form in our heads because they sound logical.*

The brain can convince us of something that is not true.

In the case of the women in the picture, it can be, for example, drawing hasty conclusions or generalizing, pigeon-holing.

The first information we learn works as an anchor for us - we remember it well. It affects our further perception and we often judge other, similar situations according to it.

Cognitive distortions

This slide introduces the examples section. Go to the next slide and you will learn specific examples of cognitive distortions and their explanations.

EXAMPLES OF COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS

Examples of cognitive distortions I

You see four symbols on this slide. Click on one of them to view it. View one by one. After you read the examples, think about the symbolism of the pictures. Do the words and the picture have a connection? The visuals should help you remember the examples.



How do you display them?

Click on the symbol and a section in the same colour will expand. On it is the name of the cognitive bias and the specific example. We've selected ones that you may have encountered in your life. Once you've read it, click on the box again and it will disappear. Click on the next symbol to see them all in turn.

Try to brainstorm more examples for specific cognitive distortions.

Black and white thinking



Example: *“My presentation was a complete failure. I was stuttering all the time, I blushed, and in the end I didn’t even have time for questions.”*

Black and white thinking
everything is either absolutely great or completely useless.



Filtering

Example: *“My presentation was a complete failure. Carl told me that I was speaking way too fast and it didn’t make sense to him.”*

Filtering
we emphasize unsuccessful details, we forget about successful moments and we do not attach much importance to them.



Exaggeration × downplaying



Example: *“Thank you very much, you helped me a lot, I am forever in your debt...”*

Exaggeration × downplaying
most often in relation to work done or when helping another person.

Justification based on emotions



Example: *“He’s a terrible chef, I’ve never eaten such disgusting food.”*

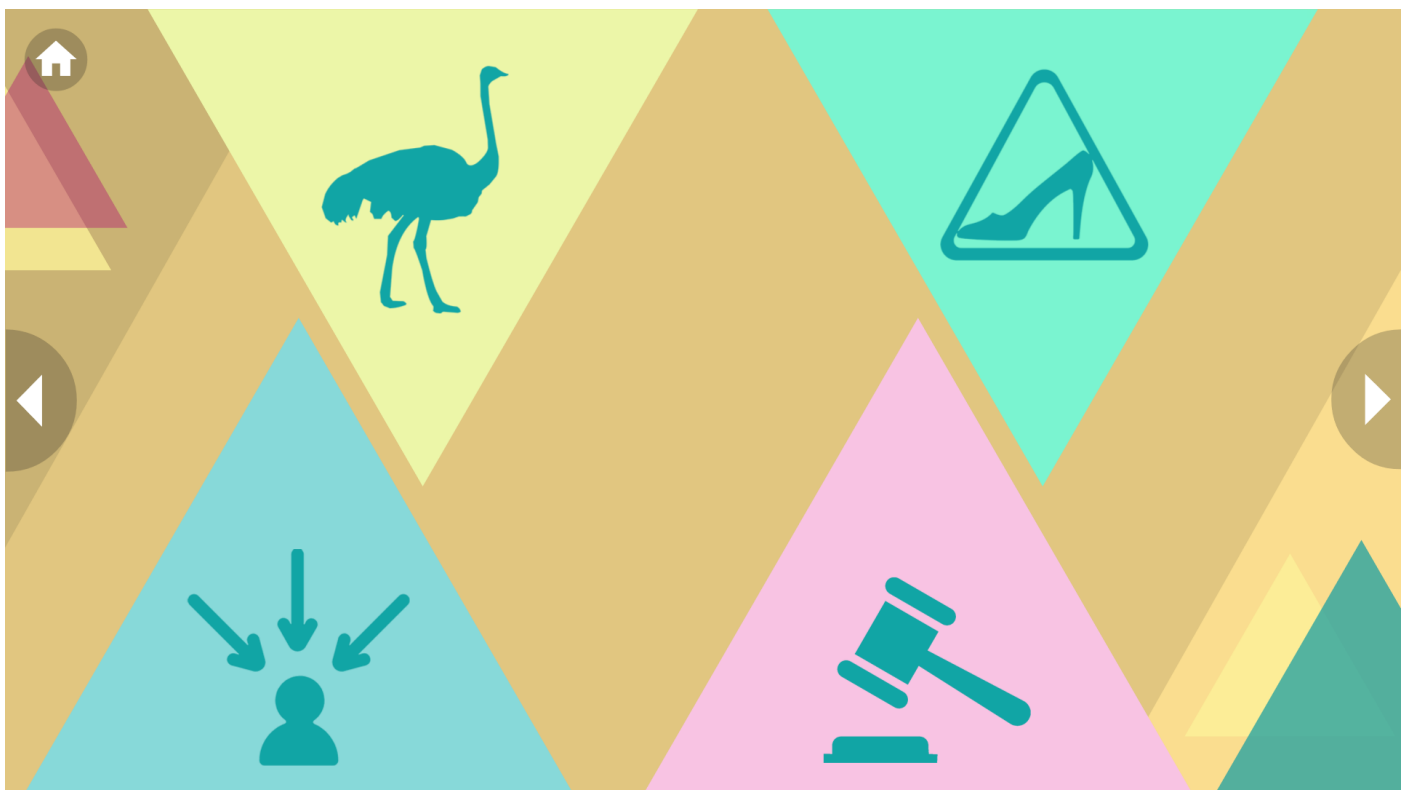
Justification based on emotions
we believe that our feelings reflect reality.

Examples of cognitive distortions II

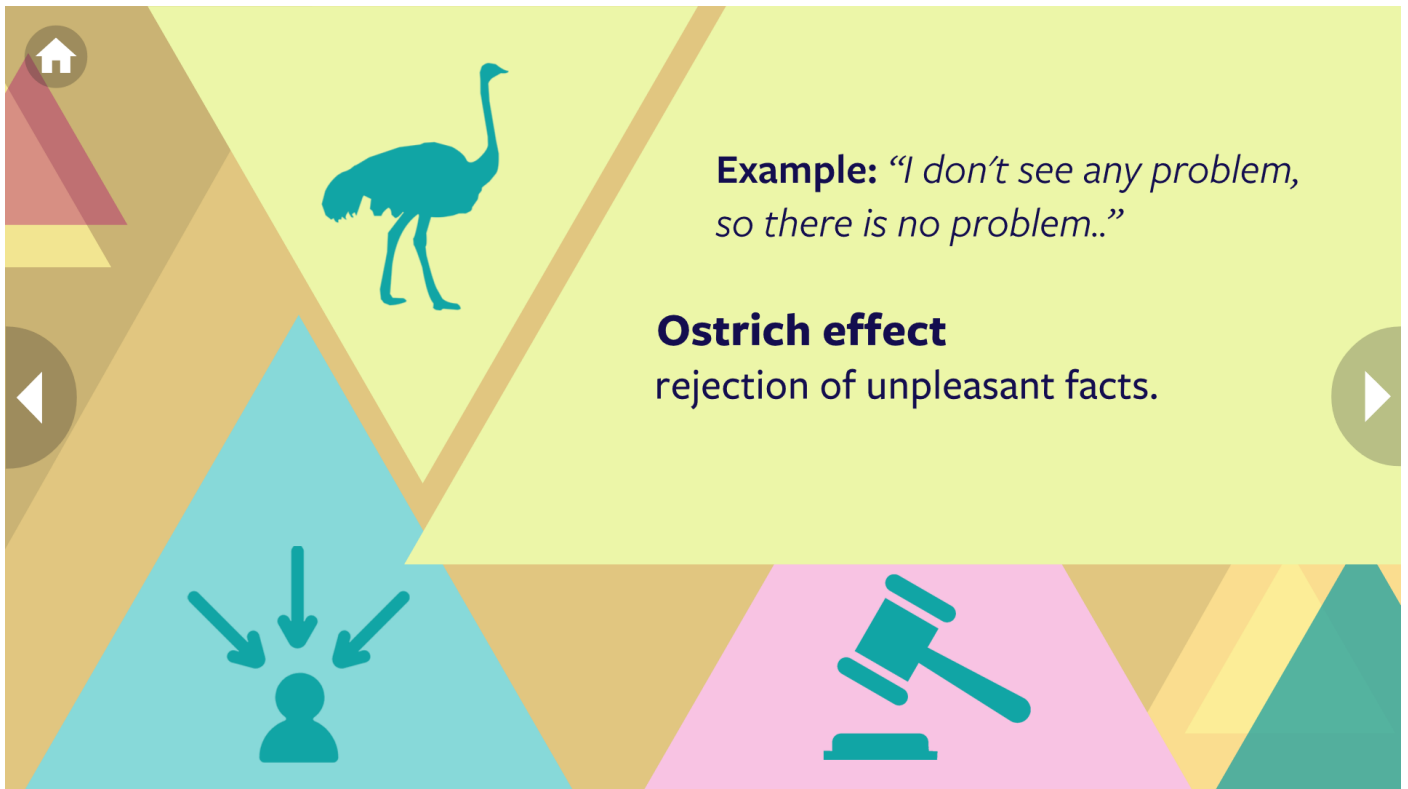
There are many more cognitive distortions. Here are four more examples. Proceed as before.

You see four symbols on this slide. Click on one of them to view it. View one by one. After you read the examples, think about the symbolism of the pictures. Do the words and the picture have a connection? The visuals should help you remember the examples.

See the slides below for specific examples.



Ostrich effect



This slide features a light green background with a teal ostrich icon in the upper left. Below the ostrich, there is a teal silhouette of a person with three arrows pointing towards them. To the right of the person icon, there is a teal gavel icon. The slide includes a home button in the top left, a left arrow in the middle left, and a right arrow in the middle right.

Example: “I don’t see any problem, so there is no problem..”

Ostrich effect
rejection of unpleasant facts.

Stereotyping



This slide features a light teal background with a teal high-heeled shoe icon inside a triangle in the upper right. Below the shoe icon, there is a teal silhouette of a person with three arrows pointing towards them. To the right of the person icon, there is a teal gavel icon. The slide includes a home button in the top left, a left arrow in the middle left, and a right arrow in the middle right.

Example: “No woman can drive a car properly.”

Stereotyping
groups of people have certain characteristics.

I always have to be right



Example: *“I don’t care what you think, but I’m right.”*

I always have to be right
we are constantly trying to prove that our opinions and actions are right.

Blaming



Example: *“You’re the reason I have a headache. Because you’re making me worry again.”*

Blaming
we blame other people for our pain, or we blame ourselves for every problem.

Maybe some of them looked familiar. Maybe you've heard or even said something similar. **Remember, manipulative speech is not right**, but it can be corrected. Just be aware of what you want to say and how you can say it. And if someone talks to you like that, at least you'll recognize it and notice that they're not being direct.

How to use critical thinking

We've imaged your brain on the slide. Imagine it's your brain.

If you're getting information, you're evaluating it in some way.

On the left (blue) are the stimuli that are good for critical thinking.

On the right, the ones that don't.

Critical thinking

- to work with information
- to not believe everything right away
- to not get upset
- to think about it

- to defend your point of view
- to comment on everything
- to trust the tradition
- to go on intuition

Click on the blue part to see the details. Similarly, you can click on the right part and read the negative influences.

See also the info button for more interesting things.



Critical thinking

We must pay more attention to who is telling us the truth and who is just trying to make the words look like the truth.

Critical thinking = the ability to work with information and evaluate it correctly, the ability to take a distance from the communicated (to not yield to emotions, first impressions, distortion or manipulation).

We need to **be critical** of media content and try to **see through** if a particular blogger, singer or politician is just playing a strange game on us.



Always try to justify why a particular action does not/contributes to critical thinking. Have you ever encountered anything like this in your life? Do you have experience of this in your own environment?

And what contributes to critical evaluation and what does not? Click on the blue part of the brain for details of the positive influences. For negative influences, click on the red part of the brain. This will make the information more complete.



Critical thinking

- to work with information

- to not believe everything right away

- to not get upset

- to think about it

to verify that the information is true and what sources it is based on

to not spread information on the basis of headlines or incomplete information

to approach information calmly, to look for causes and consequences

to ask questions and look for answers, to look at things from different angles



In order to think critically about something, we need:

- ▶ to work with information and use it in the right context
 - ▷ to verify that the information is true and what sources it is based on
- ▶ to not believe everything right away
 - ▷ to not spread information on the basis of headlines or incomplete information
- ▶ to not get upset
 - ▷ to approach information calmly, to look for causes and consequences
- ▶ to think about it
- ▶ to ask questions and look for answers, to look at things from different angles

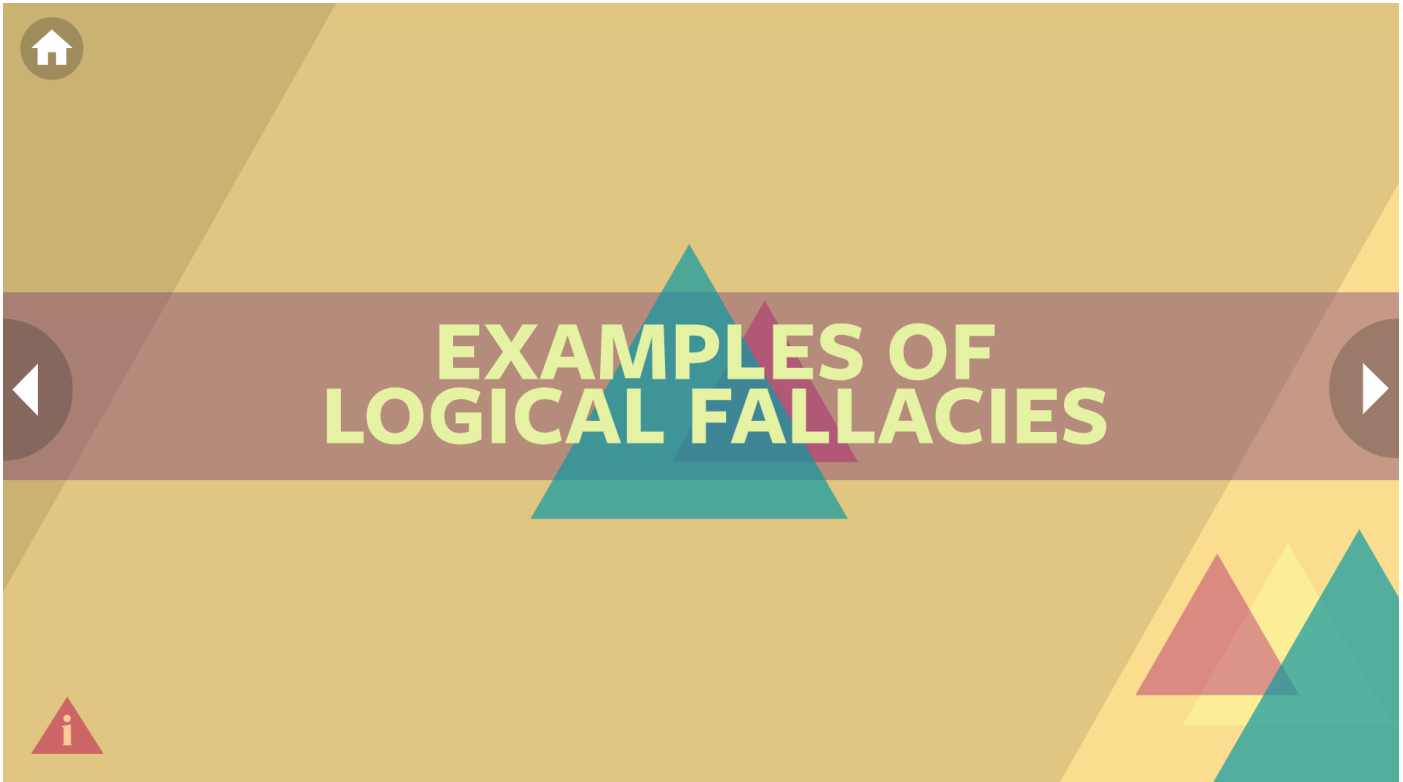


On the contrary, it is useless for critical thinking:

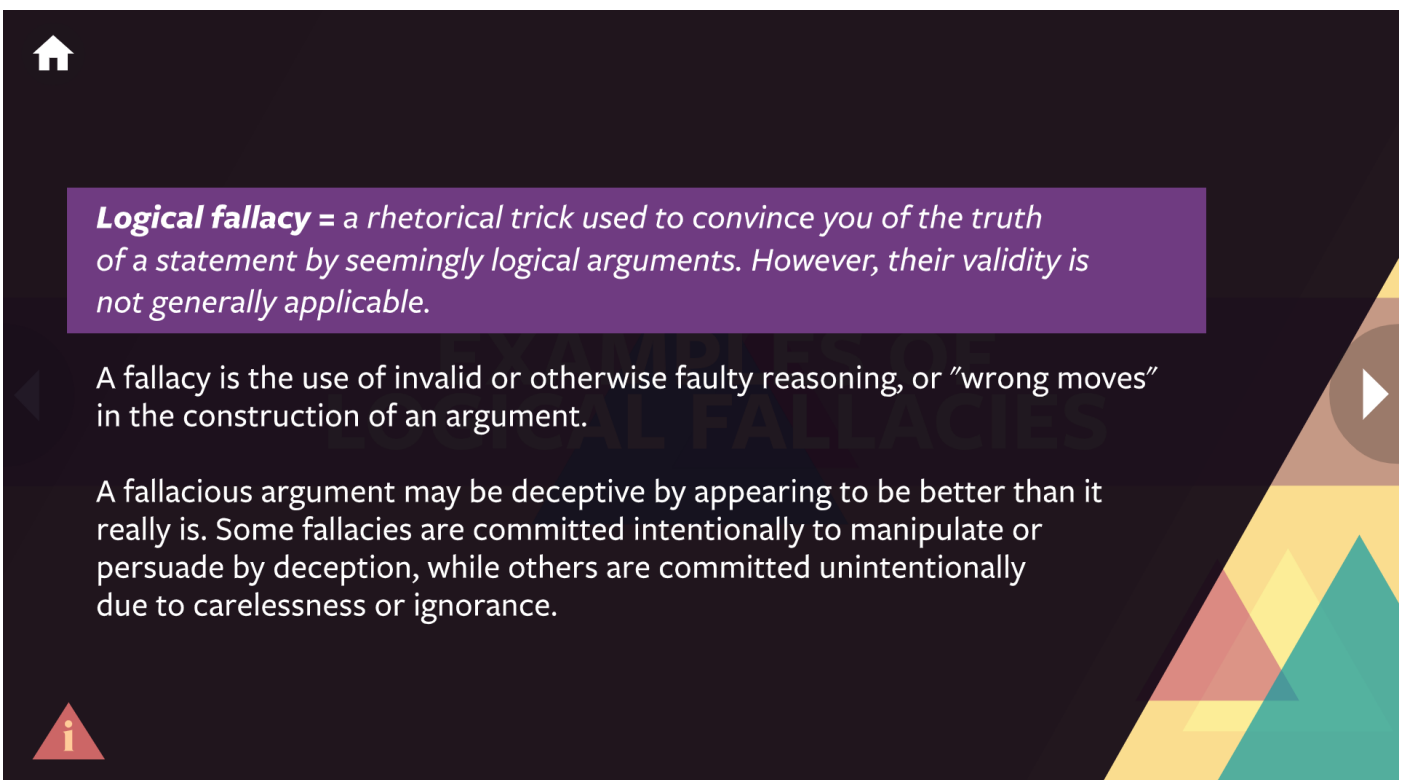
- ▶ to defend your point of view
 - ▷ to look for an explanation of why my opinion is correct
- ▶ to comment on everything
 - ▷ to communicate my point of view on different topics publicly
- ▶ to trust the tradition
 - ▷ to focus on what we are used to
- ▶ to go on intuition
 - ▷ to judge and evaluate on the basis of inner feeling

Logical fallacies

This slide introduces the examples section. Go to the next slide and learn the explanation of logical fallacies.



Click on the info button for more details.



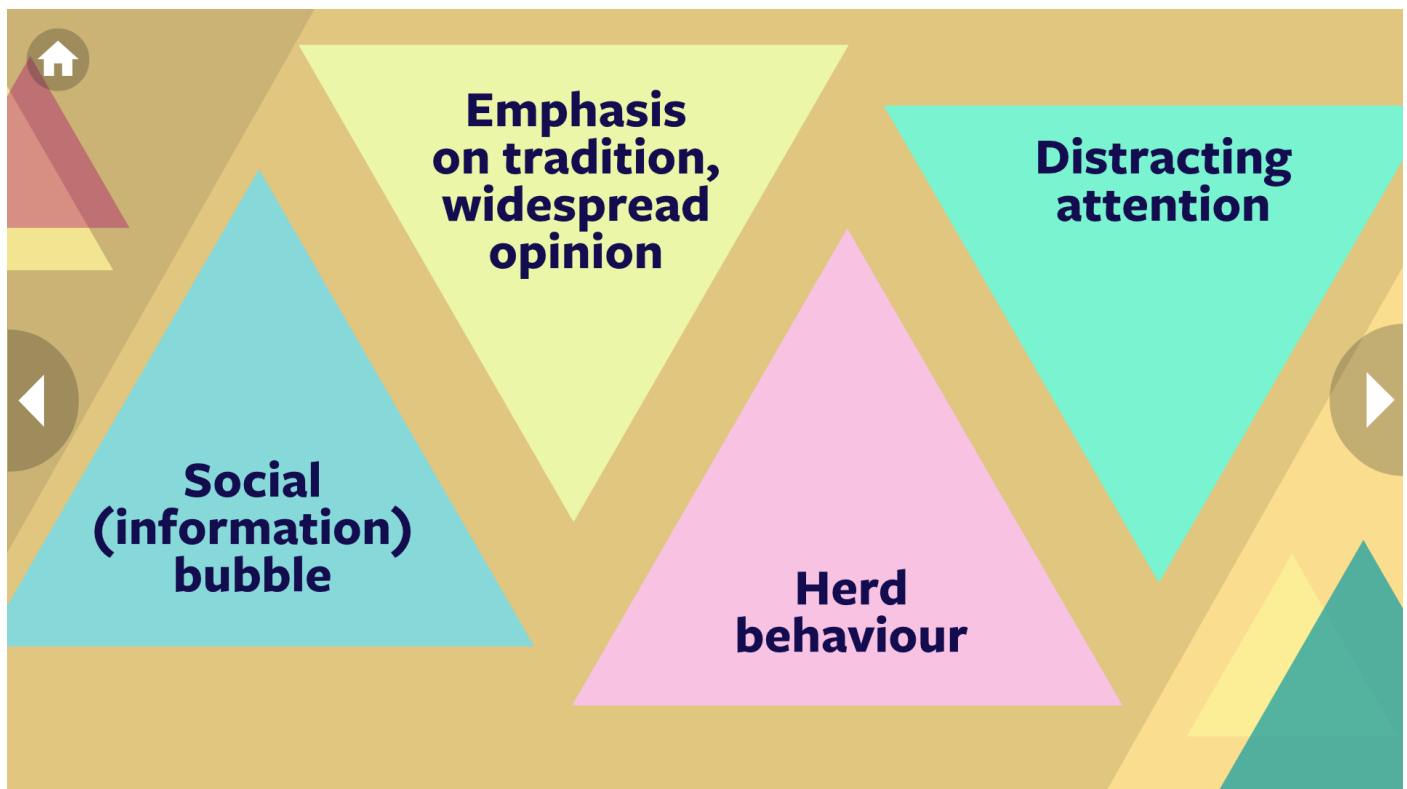
Examples of logical fallacies I

Now we're talking about **logical fallacies**. You can be sure that these formulations are not used by people to better communicate with you. The goal is more often an attempt to persuade you or manipulate you...



Logical fallacy = a rhetorical trick used to convince you of the truth of a statement by seemingly logical arguments. However, their validity is not generally applicable.

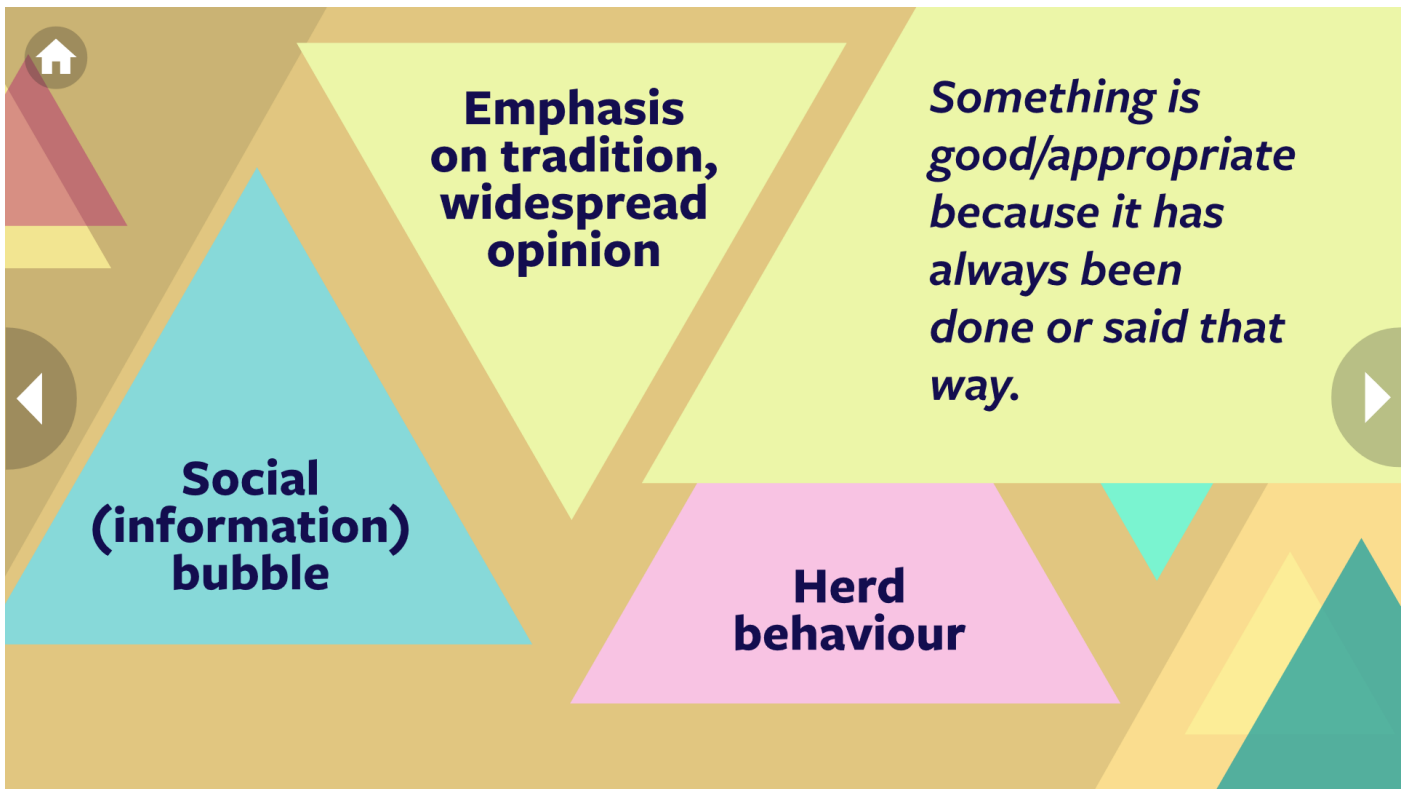
You see four triangles on this slide. Click on one of them to view it. View one by one. After you read the explanation.



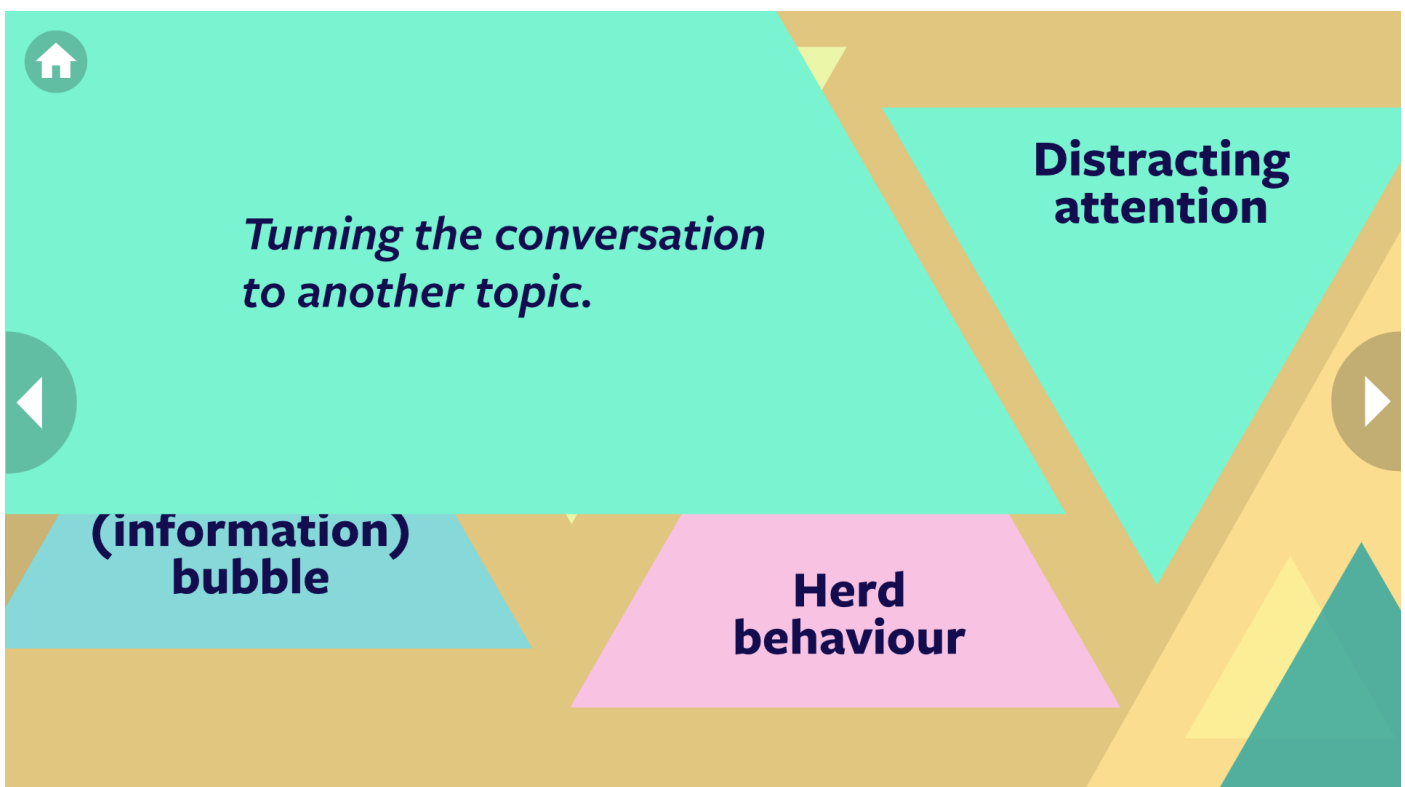
How do you display them?

Click on the symbol and a section in the same colour will expand. On it is the name of the logical fallacy and the specific explanation. We've selected ones that you may have encountered in your life. Once you've read it, click on the box again and it will disappear. Click on the next symbol to see them all in turn.

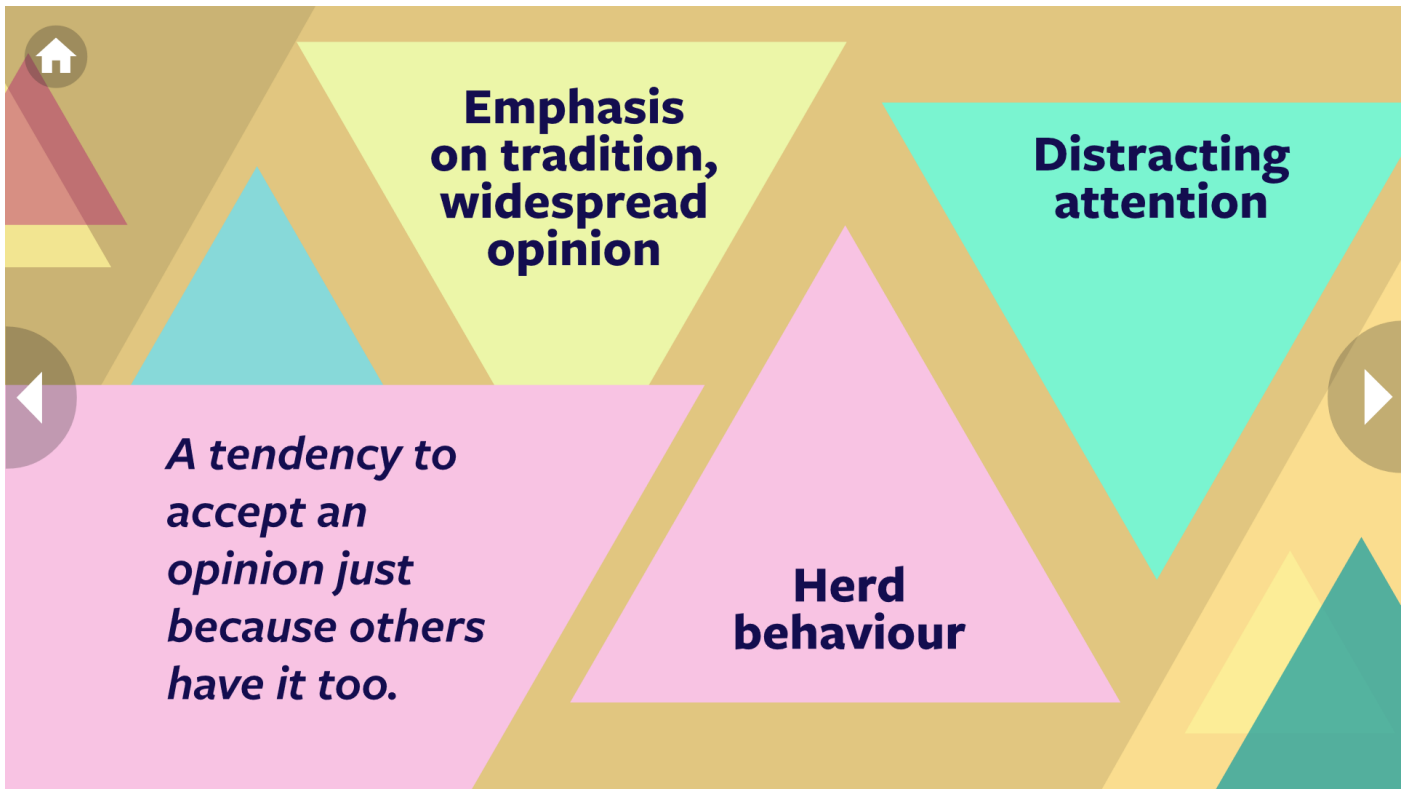
Emphasis on the tradition, widespread opinion



Distracting attention

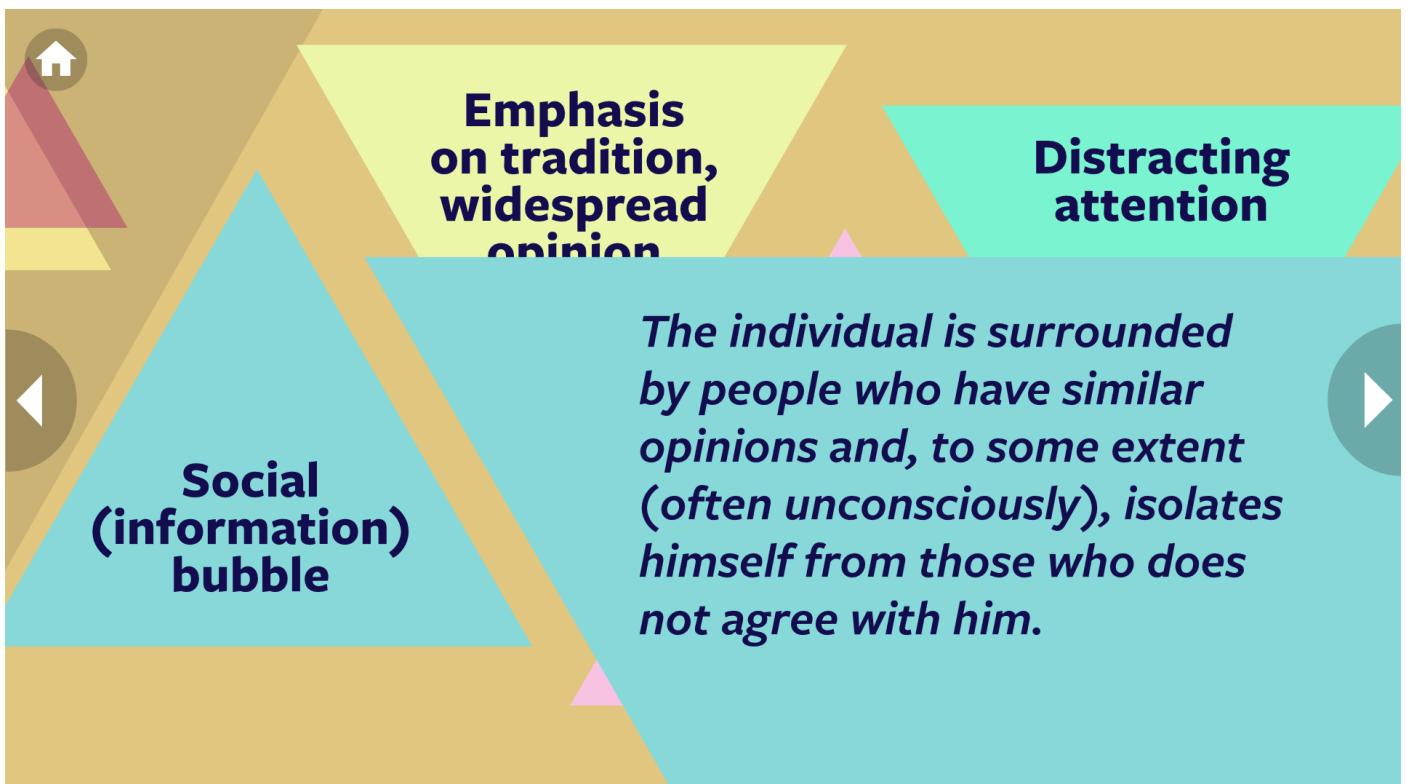


Herd behaviour

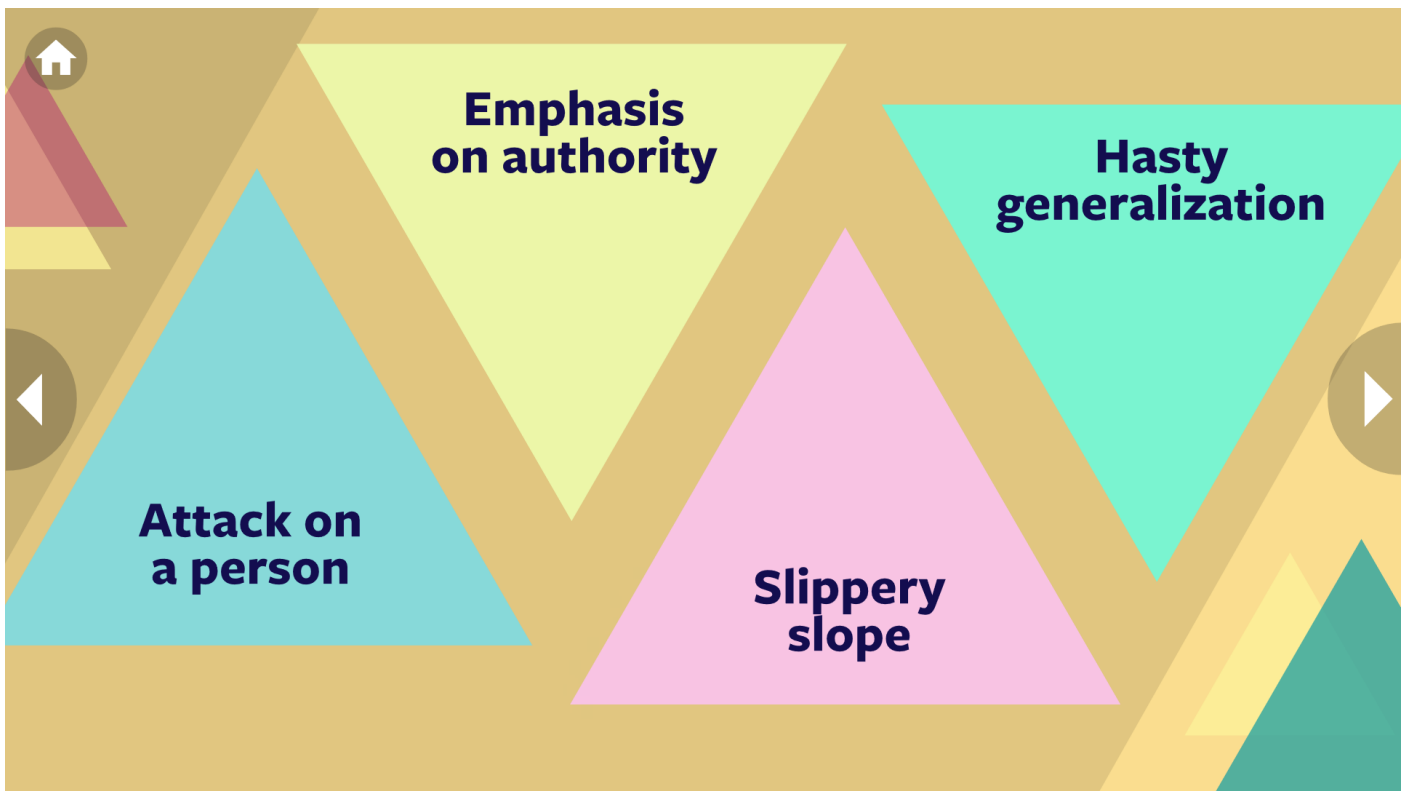


Remember this expression. You will also hear about it in the lesson "Manipulation and Propaganda". You will see how it can be used in practice and in a political context.

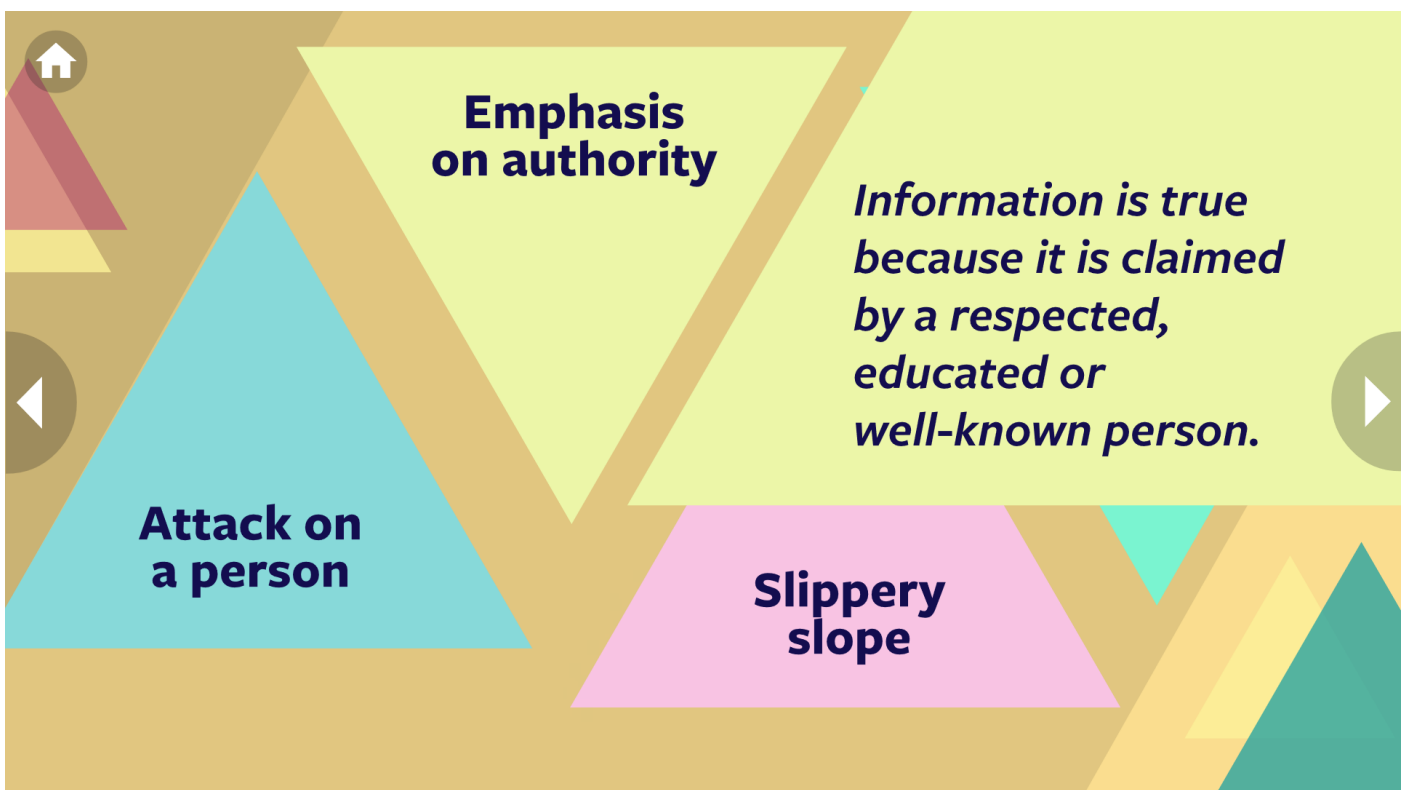
Social (information) bubble



Examples of logical fallacies II



Emphasis on authority



Attack on a person

Attack on a person

Emphasis on authority

Hasty generalization

To question credibility of the person as such and not of the arguments.

Slippery slope

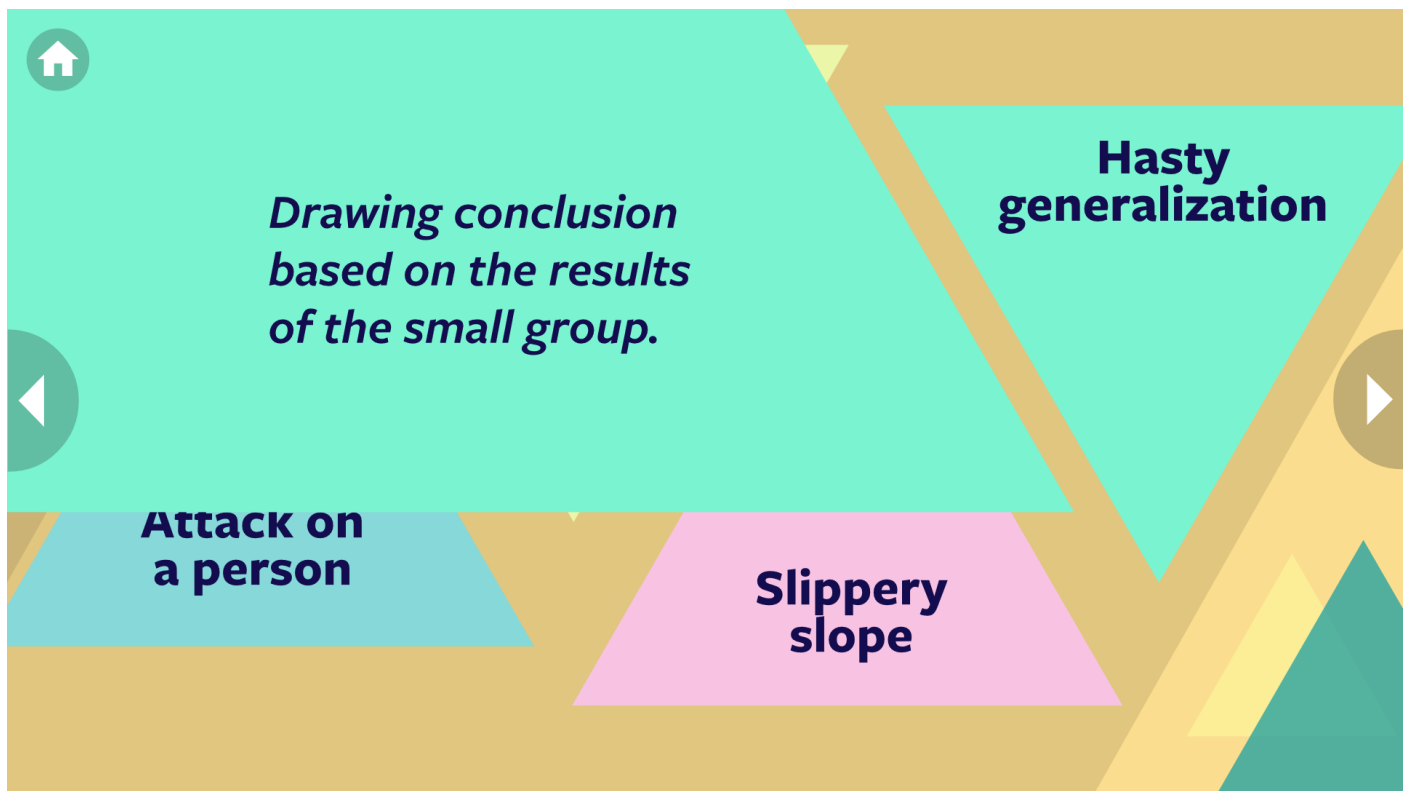
Slippery slope

Emphasis on authority

Hasty generalization

One solution will cause subsequent adverse situations.

Hasty generalization



Concrete examples of logical fallacies I

In this section you see three Examples of LOGICAL FALLACIES. We will give specific examples where verbal manipulation is used. Read what you see on the slide. Think about it and then click on the specific triangle. This will bring up an example.

Think of your own example before you click on it. Write it down on paper.

After you read the example, think of another example for each one. Discuss with your classmates.

Hasty conclusion
to draw a conclusion without thinking about other possible interpretations.

Emphasis on novelty
to assume that something is better just because it is new.

All or nothing
to assume that if a perfect result cannot be achieved, there is no point in striving for anything.

Hasty conclusion

The slide features a light green background with a large, stylized 'V' shape in the center. The left side of the 'V' is yellow, and the right side is light green. The bottom of the 'V' is pink. There are decorative geometric shapes: a red triangle on the left, a teal triangle on the right, and a yellow triangle at the bottom left. Navigation icons include a home icon in the top left, a left arrow in the middle left, and a right arrow in the middle right.

Hasty conclusion

to draw a conclusion without thinking about other possible interpretations.

“This post has only 3 likes. I won’t even read it, it won’t be worth it.”

something is better just because it is new.

Emphasis on novelty

The slide features a light green background with a large, stylized 'V' shape in the center. The left side of the 'V' is yellow, and the right side is light green. The bottom of the 'V' is pink. There are decorative geometric shapes: a red triangle on the left, a teal triangle on the right, and a yellow triangle at the bottom left. Navigation icons include a home icon in the top left, a left arrow in the middle left, and a right arrow in the middle right.

Hasty conclusion

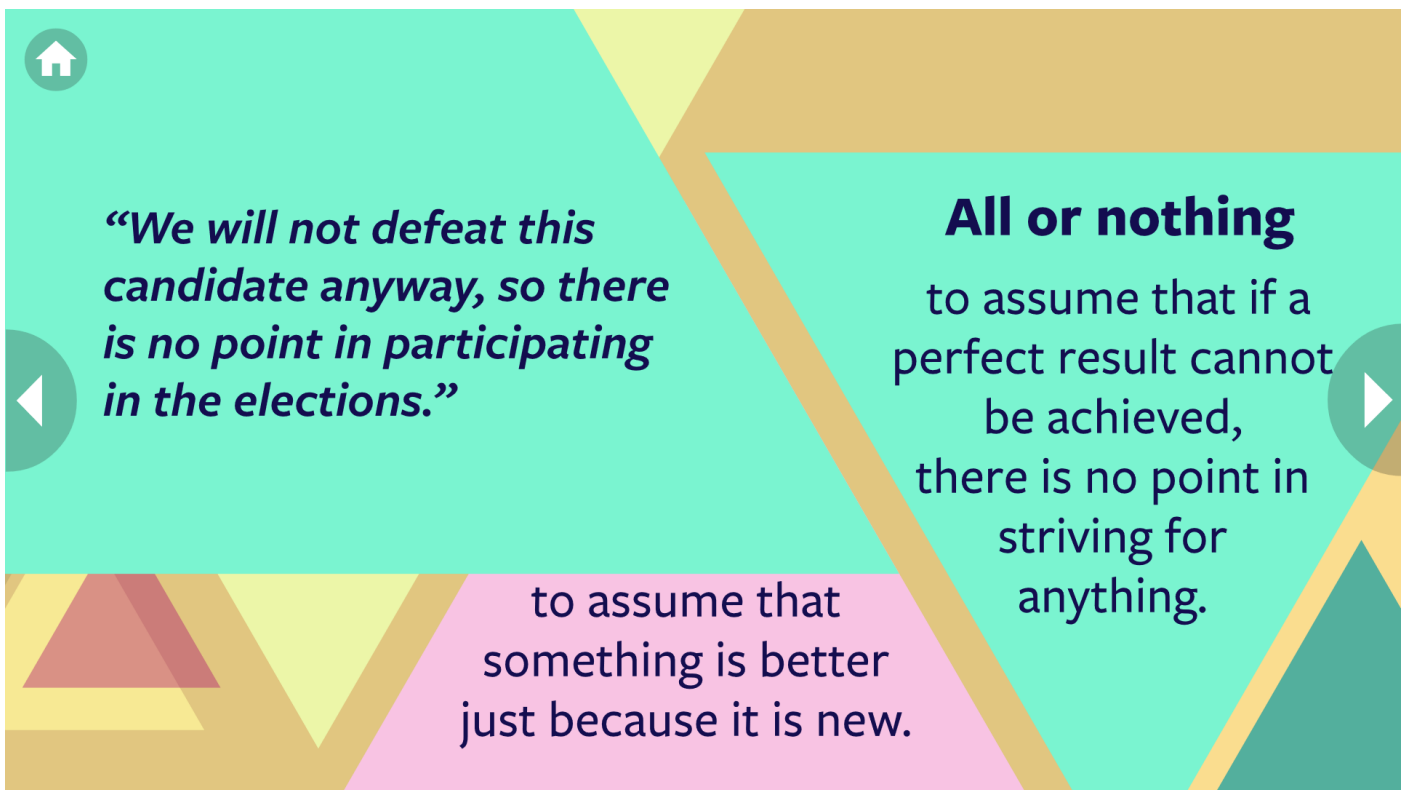
to draw a conclusion without thinking about other possible interpretations.

Emphasis on novelty

to assume that something is better just because it is new.

“Finally, we have another mayor. He is new, so he will definitely be much better than the previous one.”

All or nothing



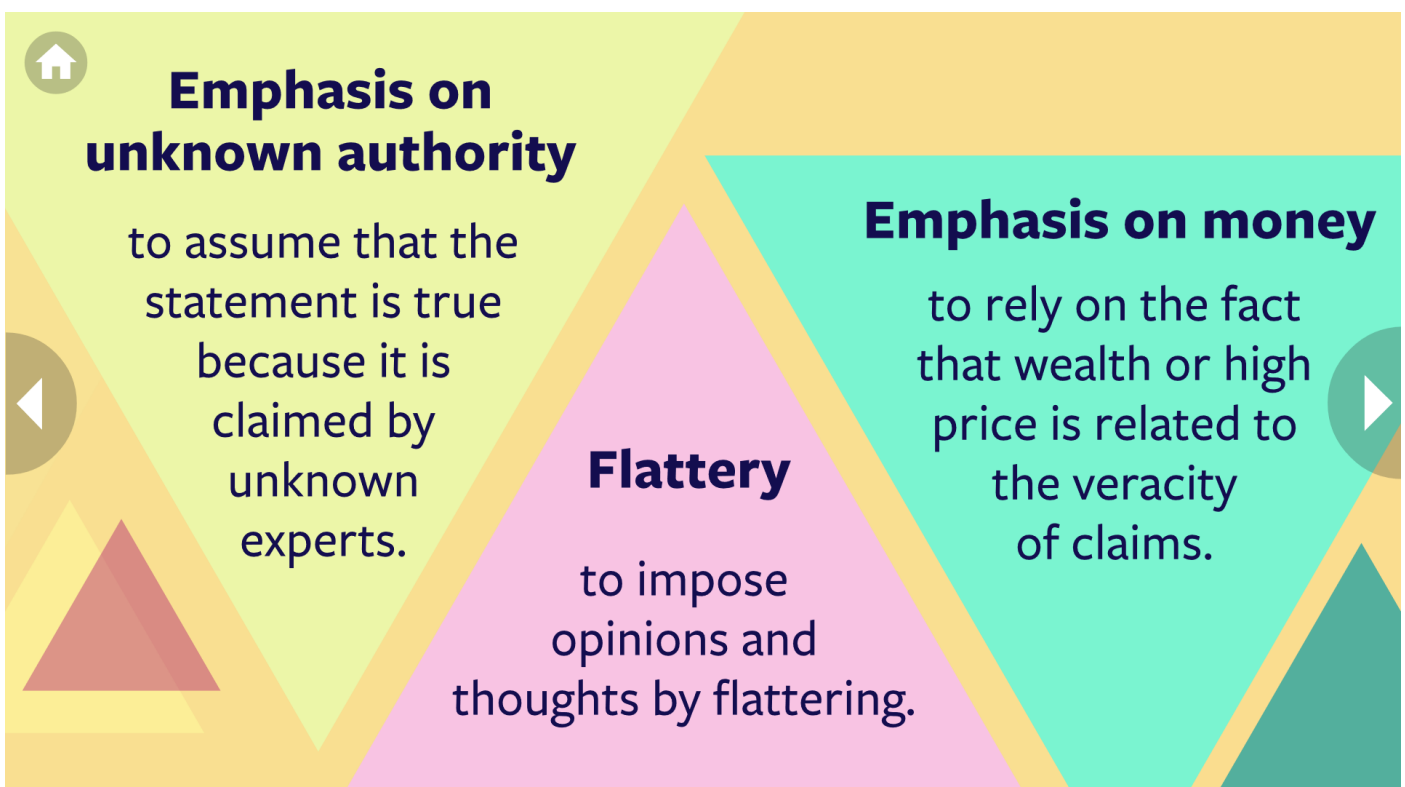
This infographic features a teal background with a yellow and orange geometric pattern. It includes a home icon in the top left, a left arrow on the left side, and a right arrow on the right side. The text is arranged in three sections: a quote on the left, a definition on the right, and a description at the bottom.

“We will not defeat this candidate anyway, so there is no point in participating in the elections.”

All or nothing
to assume that if a perfect result cannot be achieved, there is no point in striving for anything.

to assume that something is better just because it is new.

Concrete examples of logical fallacies II



This infographic features a yellow and orange geometric pattern. It includes a home icon in the top left, a left arrow on the left side, and a right arrow on the right side. The text is arranged in three sections: 'Emphasis on unknown authority' on the left, 'Flattery' in the center, and 'Emphasis on money' on the right.

Emphasis on unknown authority
to assume that the statement is true because it is claimed by unknown experts.

Flattery
to impose opinions and thoughts by flattering.

Emphasis on money
to rely on the fact that wealth or high price is related to the veracity of claims.

Emphasis on unknown authority



Home icon

Emphasis on unknown authority

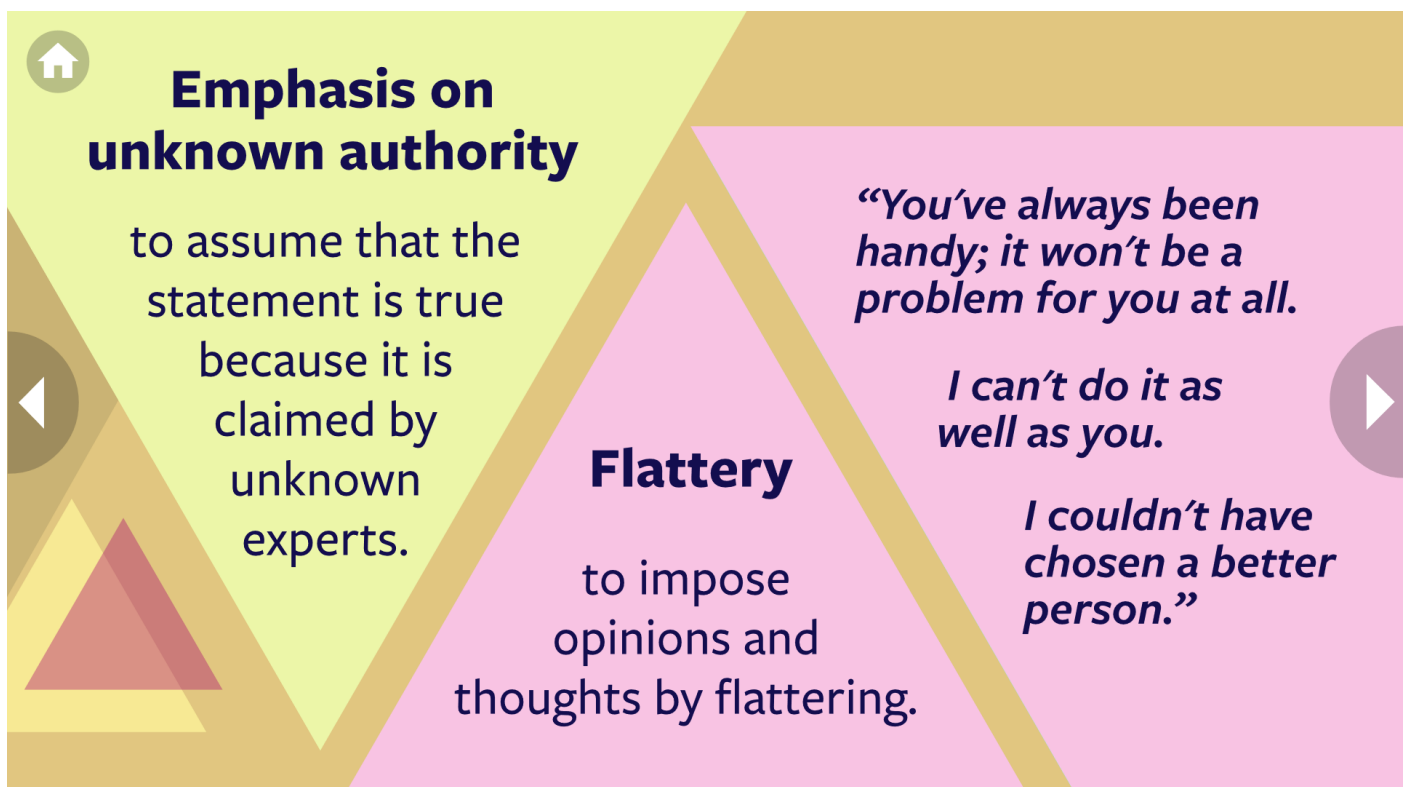
to assume that the statement is true because it is claimed by unknown experts.

“Researchers in America have shown that it is ideal to lose weight at 8 o’clock in the morning.”

opinions and thoughts by flattering.

Navigation arrows

Flattery



Home icon

Emphasis on unknown authority

to assume that the statement is true because it is claimed by unknown experts.

Flattery

to impose opinions and thoughts by flattering.

“You’ve always been handy; it won’t be a problem for you at all.

I can’t do it as well as you.

I couldn’t have chosen a better person.”

Navigation arrows

Emphasis on money



“Even the famous millionaire claims that aliens exist!”

Emphasis on money

to rely on the fact that wealth or high price is related to the veracity of claims.

to impose opinions and thoughts by flattering.

Concrete examples of logical fallacies III

Emphasis on probability
to say that something must happen just because it can happen.

Deceptive appearance
to assume that when something is beautiful, it is also true.

Distraction
to confuse the counterparty by unrelated reasons.

Emphasis on probability

Emphasis on probability
to say that something must happen just because it can happen.

“I’m telling you, he’ll win the election. After all, he won last time, so why not now?”

counterparty by unrelated reasons.

Distraction

The infographic for 'Distraction' features a central pink triangle with a gold border. To its left is a yellow triangle, and to its right is a light pink triangle. The background is a collage of geometric shapes in gold, yellow, and pink. Navigation icons include a home icon in the top left, a left arrow on the left side, and a right arrow on the right side.

Emphasis on probability
to say that something must happen just because it can happen.

Distraction
to confuse the counterparty by unrelated reasons.

“Just sign it here. You have a beautiful pen, and even with dedication. Was that a gift?”

Deceptive appearance

The infographic for 'Deceptive appearance' features a central teal triangle with a gold border. To its left is a yellow triangle, and to its right is a light teal triangle. The background is a collage of geometric shapes in gold, yellow, and teal. Navigation icons include a home icon in the top left, a left arrow on the left side, and a right arrow on the right side.

“I will draw information from this website, I really like its high-quality web graphics.”

Deceptive appearance
to assume that when something is beautiful, it is also true.

to confuse the counterparty by unrelated reasons.

We have more examples of logical fallacies for you to practise.

„Pineapple does not belong on pizza. It has never been put on pizza, so I don't understand this innovation.“

▶ **Emphasis on tradition** — to believe that something is true only because it has always been done that way.

„Every little child will confirm that the tomato is a vegetable.“

▶ **Emphasis on widespread opinion** — to assume the statement is true because most people believe in it.

„If you don't brush your teeth, they will all turn black and fall out.“

▶ **Intimidation** — to substantiate claims by fear.

„Another proposal is to set up music evenings for seniors. Well, I can already see the seniors dancing and singing.“

▶ **Ridicule** — to present somebody else's arguments so that they look ridiculous.

„Will you write the paper for me? I really can't keep up. I look after my sick grandmother and a little sister and I have to walk the dog. I have no idea how I can handle it.“

▶ **Arousing compassion** — to persuade someone by sympathizing with us.

„The fashion model is terribly stupid. You know... beautiful people can't be smart.“

▶ **Together, that's why** — to claim that events that occur at the same time must be related.

„Every time we write a maths test, it starts to rain.“

▶ **After that, that's why** — to assume that events that occur in succession must have some connection.

„I saw the new gaming keyboard on the Instagram account of those GTA players. It will probably be really great, as every player added at least 5 posts about it.“

▶ **Overlooking a common cause** — to assume a relationship between two phenomena, but ignore a common cause.

„Vegetables are healthy because they are good for digestion. And because they are good for digestion, they are very healthy.“

▶ **Logical circle** — to draw a conclusion that is the same as some of the previous arguments.

„I've been betting the same numbers unsuccessfully for two years now, it definitely has to turn out well next month.“

▶ **Gambler's fallacy** — to believe that past random results will affect future random results.

„Thomas and Gabriela from 8th grade have excellent school results. Teaching at 8th grade will be a reward, I'm really looking forward to it.“

▶ **Composing** — to rely on the fact that an attribute of the part is also an attribute of the whole.

„This TV broadcasts only stupid shows, the film today will be bad as well.“

▶ **Dividing** — to believe that an attribute of a whole is also an attribute of each of its parts.

„What he says is stupid. He can't understand it because he's just a gardener.“

▶ **Attack on a person** — to have reservations about the person, not about the arguments.

„You either buy it for us or you get a thrashing.“

▶ **The wrong dilemma** — to present two solutions as the only ones possible.

„If you don't do your homework, you will get an F. Then you can't have an A on the school report, so don't expect to get to high school.“

▶ **Slippery slope** — to assume that a small change will cause a chain of disasters.

„But our historian said that grand is another name for grandma.

It does not therefore belong to the listed words.“

▶ **Emphasis on inappropriate authority** — to judge that the statement is true because it is claimed by an expert.

The End

Conclusion

You have successfully completed the Critical thinking skills lesson. You have learnt what are logical fallacies and cognitive errors. But more importantly, you should recognize them in practice.

If you understand the examples, you are on your way to not being easily fooled. If not, it takes a little more practice. This lesson is full of examples. Go through it again and think about them.

Also show the examples to siblings, parents or grandparents. Even many adults have trouble recognizing that they are take for a ride.

We have included this lesson so that you can think critically even in public life and the information you receive from different sources.



Reading list

Kako prepoznati dezinformacije i lažne vijesti - nastavni materijali za srednje škole.

Web source: <https://www.medijskapismenost.hr/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/medijska-pismenost-lazne-vijesti.pdf>

ŠALABAHTER S PITANJIMA ZA KRITIČKO RAZMIŠLJANJE.

Web source: <https://www.medijskapismenost.hr/salabahter-s-pitanjima-za-kriticko-razmisljanje/>

European Union. *Prepoznajte i suzbijte dezinformacije.*

Web source: https://europa.eu/learning-corner/sites/default/files/files/disinformation-presentation_hr.pdf

Web source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uAK3eCCYusg>

Boris Teodosijević. *Šta je to kritičko (analitičko) mišljenje.*

Web source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uAK3eCCYusg>

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