

THE ACADEMIC SUCCESS CENTER

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When developing a counterargument, focus on what premises the person used to reach the conclusion, not on who he is.

Hasty Generalization

Makes a sweeping assumption about an entire group based on a limited selection of information

Example: *“We had fine arts at my high school, so I don’t think those classes are in danger in Texas schools.”*

Use the broadest, most representative sample you can; remain cautious about how conclusive you claim the results are.

Post Hoc Ergo Propter Hoc (“after the thing, therefore because of the thing”)

Claims that chronology indicates causality; because X happened before Y, we can presume that X caused Y

Example: *“The Cubs don’t win because of the goat curse.”*

If causation is a factor in your argument, ensure that you understand the relationship between the “thing” you think is the cause and the “thing” you think is the effect.

Circular Reasoning

Uses the conclusion as a premise; will often be inadvertent and the result of restating of the conclusion within the series of points that are supposed to prove the conclusion

Example: *“The death penalty is an effective crime deterrent because it makes people less likely to commit crimes.”*

Be very careful about the way you phrase your supporting points. Ask yourself if you've merely reworded the statement that you're trying to support.