

Questioning as we learn: An introduction to critical thinking

Material for Higher Education students in Sierra Leone by INASP, UK



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Unit 4 - Snippet 106

Fallacies

You have surely seen such T-shirts which have printed on them a statement or slogan. When you give the slogans more attention, you may see that they sometimes play with logic. We assume you wouldn't take such a conditional statement as in the picture below very serious. What is the flaw?



But also in more serious discussions, you will often encounter some flawed argumentation or reasoning. Flawed arguments which can trick you are also called fallacies. In Unit 3 you learned that arguments can be 'good' or 'bad', 'sound' or 'unsound', 'cogent' or 'uncogent'. We will discuss now some quite common cases how arguments and conditional statements can be constructed in a way which may fool you to believe the author or speaker made a good point. Being aware of these fallacies is also particularly relevant in research, as it can prevent research results being misinterpreted.