

Official Test

The Fallacy Detective Test

Only a Fallacy Detective can pass this test. If you pass, you can be hired by your local branch of the Federal Bureau of Fallacy Detection. The pay is bad, but the benefits are good, especially the donuts.

Inquiring Mind Questions

1. Complete the sentence. "Thinking is hard _____."
 - a. Beans
 - b. Ground
 - c. Work
2. A person who is humble and who loves to listen, places a modest value on:
 - a. Thinking skills
 - b. His own opinions
 - c. Other people's opinions
 - d. Deviled eggs
3. A person who is humble and who loves to listen, willingly admits when:
 - a. Somebody says something incorrect
 - b. He doesn't know something
 - c. Somebody else doesn't know something.
4. When studying opposing viewpoints, we should always remember to:
 - a. Honestly evaluate all sides.
 - b. Only look at the side that is the correct one so that we are not distracted by things that are not true.
 - c. Drink plenty of water.

Fallacy Detection

Name the fallacy, if any, used in each of the following examples.

5. BRIDGET: I believe in reincarnation. I believe that when you die you come back as something else because it would be so neat to die someday and come back as a cat or an iguana or a striped cucumber beetle or something. I mean wouldn't it be cool?
6. JENNY: I don't listen to rock music. It's evil. I don't think you should either.
BERT: Really, why do you think that?
JENNY: Well, lots of reasons. In the first place, did you know that rock music came out of the hippie movement of the 60s? We all know what a wicked time the 60s were, don't we?"
7. "Senate Bill 99 would make smoking in most public buildings, most obviously restaurants, illegal. . . . The rationale is sound, based on studies published in scientific and medical journals that indicate environmental tobacco smoke causes about 62,000 coronary heart disease deaths and 3,000 cancer deaths in the United States each year." – *Delaware News Journal*
8. "I don't see anything wrong with government financial aid for students – it's just a part of life now. Every student gets it. It's really hard to get an education without it."
9. BILBO AT BIRTHDAY PARTY: I don't know half of you half as well as I should like; and I like less than half of you half as well as you deserve.
10. SHAQUILLE O'NEAL, *the famous basketball player, holds up a guitar with shiny new strings*: Buy Smitty's guitar strings – the best in the business.
11. BRIDGET: Hey, you can't eat that grape! It's stealing to eat a grape in the grocery store without paying for it.
CLAIRE: Come on, do you expect me to go over to the cash register and pay for one grape? Good grief! Everybody does it and nobody minds. It's called "taste testing."
12. "Why do I have to keep my room clean? You never do."
13. Professor Simmons and Professor Crumb were deep in the jungles of Africa searching for the Ucku-Munu tribe. The professors had been gone two weeks and were almost out of moistened towelettes.
PROFESSOR SIMMONS: Look, footprints! We must be approaching our quarry.
PROFESSOR CRUMB: Preposterous, those tracks are shoe tracks. The Ucku-Munu tribe never wears shoes.
PROFESSOR SIMMONS: How do you know that?

PROFESSOR CRUMB: Because Ucku-Munus are known to be always barefoot.

14. BERT: I don't think this climbing harness I bought fits me. I think I'm going to take it back to Climbing World and get a refund.

CLYDE: You aren't allowed to return climbing harnesses to Climbing World. They can't re-sell a used climbing harness because climbing harnesses are things which your life depends on. You might have damaged it. You can't return items which your life depends on.

BERT: You mean you can't return food that you bought at Climbing World? Your life depends on food.

CLYDE: Err . . . Not after you've eaten it, anyway.

15. POLITICIAN: I believe you should reelect me to office. Past events have shown what a good effect my service has done to this city. During my recent one-year term, unemployment reached an all-time low, and the crime rate dropped significantly.

16. "Ugh! That pie was horrible. I'm never using flour, sugar, or blueberries again!"

17. JED CLAMPET: Well, at a quiltin' party, you quilt. At a barn-raisin' party, you raise a barn. So I reckon that at a garden party, folk garden.

Statistical Fallacy Questions

18. What does a generalization need in order for it to be a strong generalization?

a. A respected authority saying that it is strong.

b. Two pieces of evidence that agree.

c. A large and representative sample.

19. Create your own example of a strong generalization.

EXAMPLE: There are 300 people in this crowd and I have asked 100 people at random, and 50 said they were a boy and 50 said they were a girl. From this I generalize that 50% of this crowd is male and 50% is female.

20. Complete the sentence: "We can't say an analogy is true or false, we can only say an analogy is ___ or ____."

a. Happy or unhappy

b. Strong or weak

c. Arminian or Calvinist

21. How can analogies be useful?

- a. Because we can gain useful information about something which we don't know very much about by comparing it to something which is similar.
- b. Because analogies are like generalizations and we know generalizations are useful.
- c. Analogies are not useful at all because "analogies" is spelled a lot like "allergies" and we know allergies are very bothersome.

Propaganda Detection

What propaganda technique, if any, is being used in the following examples?

- 22. "Get a loan at a low, low rate of only 1%. This special only lasts through the 24th. So take advantage today."
- 23. Picture of teddy bear floating face down in water.
VOICE: Give them a chance to live. Give your child swimming lessons at the Community Gym.
- 24. Commercial with a large ugly man who is mowing the roadside grass. A small sad green frog sits on the road.
FROG: Where am I to go?
A truck comes and smashes the frog.
VOICE: Let the little creatures live! Don't mow until December.
- 25. Picture of cows in a green meadow, eating grass.
VOICE: Great cheese comes from happy cows. Happy cows come from California. Eat California cheese.
- 26. Picture of sports car.
CAPTION: The reason why everyone looks twice before they cross the street. The new Jaguar XK8, built for style.
- 27. "Try our new internet service free for 30 days and be part of the broadband internet wave that's sweeping the nation."
- 28. "Lost your reading glasses again? Never fear. With the touch of a button on our new specially designed Spectacle Remote, you can locate your beeping glasses. With the new patented Photon Particle beam light and Sonic-Boom aural enhancer device, you can locate your glasses within a four mile range!"

Create Your Own

29. Which is the correct definition of the post-hoc-ergo-propter-hoc fallacy?
- Post-hoc-ergo-propter-hoc is concluding that since A happened before B, then A must have caused B.
 - Post-hoc-ergo-propter-hoc is when someone asserts that we must choose between two things, when in fact we have more than two alternatives.
 - Post-hoc-ergo-propter-hoc is claiming something is true simple because nobody has yet given any evidence to the contrary.
30. Create a short example of the post-hoc-ergo-propter-hoc fallacy.
31. Which is the correct definition of the propaganda technique called transfer?
- Transfer is when someone repeats a message loudly and very often in the hope that it will soon be believed.
 - Transfer is when someone encourages us to buy something because it is the “latest thing” – not necessarily because it is the best thing.
 - Transfer is when someone tries to make us shift our good or bad feelings about one thing to another unrelated thing.
32. Create a short example of the propaganda technique, transfer.

Test Answers

The Fallacy Detective Test

This is not a difficult test. It should be used to ensure that all the students in your class were paying attention.

Some of the answers require the student to create an example of something, such as the post-hoc-ergo-propter-hoc fallacy. These questions should be considered correct if the example the student creates is truly an example of the fallacy. If a student creates an example which you think might not be the fallacy, you might ask the student to explain his example.

A bonus could be given to students if they can find and bring to class an example of a fallacy or propaganda technique which they have found in the newspaper, on TV, etc.

When there are two possible fallacies or propaganda techniques mentioned in the answers, students' answers should be considered correct if they answer one of the possibilities.

Answers

1. C.
2. B.
3. B.
4. A.
5. Red herring.
6. Genetic fallacy, also possibly a loaded question in the last sentence.
7. Red herring. The fact that environmental smoke has killed people does not prove that it should be banned in public places.
8. Appeal to the people and possibly a red herring – the fact that it is hard to get an education without government aid is irrelevant to whether it is right or wrong.
9. Nothing.
10. Faulty appeal to authority.
11. Appeal to the people.
12. Tu quoque.
13. Circular reasoning.
14. Equivocation on the term “life depends on.”
15. Post-hoc-ergo-propter-hoc.
16. Whole-to-part.
17. Weak analogy.
18. C.
19. Answers will vary.
20. B.
21. A.
22. Exigency.
23. Appeal to fear, or possibly an appeal to pity.
24. Appeal to pity.
25. Transfer.
26. Snob appeal.
27. Bandwagon.
28. Hi-tech.
29. A.
30. Answers will vary.
31. C.
32. Answers will vary.