



15 Begging The Question Fallacy Examples

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The begging the question fallacy occurs when an argument's premise relies on the conclusion. You can identify this fallacy because the premise usually just re-states the conclusion rather than supporting it.

It's related to the [circular reasoning fallacy](#).

For example, if you say "I got the most votes because I won the election", your premise (I won the election) relies on the conclusion (I got the most votes) rather than providing evidence for it.



Instead, you'd need your premise to support the conclusion. For example, you could say "I got the most votes because I ran the best campaign." Here, the premise (I ran the best campaign) provides an explanation for the conclusion rather than simply referring back to it.

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Begging The Question Fallacy Explanation

The begging the question fallacy is also known as '*petitio principii*' in Latin, which means assuming the point.

In order to understand how this fallacy works, it is useful to first understand the two basic parts of an argument. An argument is made up of one or more premises and a conclusion.

The premises of an argument must give good and independent reasons for the conclusion to be right.

An example of a strong argument is:

1. **Conclusion:** We know the earth is round (conclusion) because
2. **Premise 1:** We have images of it from space (premise 1) and
3. **Premise 2:** The laws of gravity demonstrate that the earth is round (premise 2).

Both premises 1 and 2 support the conclusion and are independent reasons from the conclusion.



When an argument is committing the begging the question fallacy, one of the premises already assumes the conclusion. Therefore, the premise is not really providing a good reason for the conclusion, because it has already assumed that it is true.

A begging the question argument looks like this:

- **Conclusion:** We know the earth is round (conclusion) because
- **Premise:** People have known for hundreds of years that it is that shape (premise).

The premise in this argument is just saying the conclusion in a different way. In other words, the reason given for the conclusion already assumes that the conclusion is correct.

Begging The Question Fallacy Examples

1. I Am The Boss Because What I Say Goes!

Scenario: When the teenager asks her father who made him the boss, the father responds “I’m in charge because what I say goes!”

Many parents (who are perhaps too lazy to explain why they’re in charge), simply tell their children that they are in charge because ... they are in charge! That’s just the way it is.



If you didn't want to beg the question, you'd have to provide an actual explanation about *why* they're in charge, rather than just reiterating "what I say goes." A better response would be "I'm in charge because I have more life experience so I can make better decisions than you."

Unfortunately, parents usually want to be dismissive rather than reasoning with their children, which leads to a lot of 'begging the question'.

2. The Book Is A Bestseller Because It Sold The Most Copies

Scenario: When a journalist asks an author why he thinks his book is a bestseller, the author snidely replies; "because it sold the most copies."

In this scenario, the author doesn't provide a rationale for his conclusion. Rather, he simply reiterates the conclusion in a new form. In other words, he begs the question.

A superior answer that doesn't rely on the conclusion for its validity would be "because it has a unique and compelling plot." Here, a justification for the book's bestseller status is provided, rather than a mere paraphrase of the question.

3. We're Innocent Because The Report Says We Did No Wrong

Scenario: A prime minister commissions an internal report into a scandal in his government. The internal report comes back saying they did nothing wrong, which he brandishes at all possible moments during interviews about the scandal.

Politicians are excellent at logical fallacies, including the begging the question fallacy.



Regularly, a government will commission an “internal report” which they can control and ensure it comes up with a biased answer. Then, they brandish the report as a shield to defend themselves and claim they did no wrong!

The problem here is, of course, that they’re using the biased finding of innocence to defence their innocence rather than referring to actual facts. A superior answer would, of course, be to provide an alibi, an alternative explanation for the scandal, or other evidence that actually supports their claim of innocence.

4. Water Bottles Are Bad For The Environment Because They’re Bad For Nature

Scenario: Water bottles are bad for the environment because bottles negatively impact nature.

Even though we all know that water bottles are bad for the environment if not recycled, that does not mean that we should just accept the above argument. The conclusion of the argument is that water bottles are bad for the environment and that is an obvious fact.

Despite how obvious the conclusion is, the premise still needs to support the conclusion and give a good reason to support the conclusion. In this scenario, the premise given is that ‘bottles negatively impact nature’. This premise is

saying the same thing as the conclusion. Nature is a synonym for the environment and so the premise is restating the conclusion in a different way.



Therefore, the argument is begging the question because the premise is already assuming the conclusion is correct. What the premise should be doing is offering us a valid reason for why the conclusion is correct.

5. Capitalism Is Good Because The Free Market Is Good

Scenario: Capitalism supports the free market economy because it encourages the government to not interfere with business.

This argument about capitalism comes to the conclusion that capitalism supports the free market. The premise given for this conclusion is that it encourages the government not to interfere with business.

While the terminology used in the conclusion and premise is different, this argument is begging the question. The premise that 'capitalism encourages the government not to interfere with business' is another way of talking about the free market economy.

Therefore, the premise is already assuming the conclusion and does so by phrasing the conclusion differently.

6. Love Is The Best Because No Emotion Is Better!

Scenario: There is nothing more powerful than love because all the other

emotions are weaker than love.



Here, the conclusion is that love is the most powerful thing. However, the premise given for this conclusion is that ‘all other emotions are weaker than love’.

Stating that ‘all other emotions are weaker than love’ is actually the same as saying that love is the most powerful thing. If love is the most powerful thing then necessarily all the other emotions are weaker than it.

In this scenario, the premise is just restating the conclusion in a different form. Therefore, the argument is begging the question.

When “love is the answer”, a person is often also engaging in an [appeal to emotion fallacy](#).

7. Dogs Are The Best Companions Because They Love People Most

Scenario: There are no better pets than dogs. They love people the most.
That is why I think that dogs really make for the best companions.

In this scenario, there are two premises. Firstly, that ‘there are no better pets than dogs’ and, secondly, that ‘dogs love people the most’. The conclusion derived from these two premises is that ‘dogs make for the best companions’.

The first premise makes the same claim as the conclusion, just worded differently. While the second premise may be true it still doesn’t give us enough

reason to believe the conclusion that dogs are the best companions. It gives some evidence, but not enough.



Therefore, The first premise says the same thing as the conclusion and so is not giving us a reason to believe the conclusion. The second conclusion gives us a reason, but not a very strong one. This means that the whole argument is begging the question because of the first premise.

8. That Book Is Bad Because It's Harmful

Scenario: That book is really bad for people, everyone knows that it can be harmful if someone reads it.

The conclusion given about the book is that it is really bad for people. In order to decide if this is a good conclusion we are given one premise, that 'it can be harmful if someone reads it'.

Claiming that the book is harmful is necessarily a negative property of that book. If the book is harmful it is by definition bad. However, claiming the book is harmful does not tell us anything about why the book is harmful.

Therefore, the premise is just stating that the book is bad in a different way without giving any good reasons to believe that it is really bad. We can safely say that in this scenario the argument is begging the question.

9. Fruit Is Nutritious Because It's Packed With Goodness

Scenario: Fruit is so nutritious because it is packed full of goodness.



It is true that fruit is nutritious and therefore we can accept the conclusion given here that 'fruit is so nutritious'. The question that concerns us here though, is if we should accept the conclusion based on the evidence or premise we are given in this scenario?

The premise we are given in this scenario is that 'fruit is packed full of goodness'. So, while, we would normally accept the conclusion we need to assess the premise in this scenario. The premise here is only restating the conclusion in a more informal manner but the meaning is the same.

The premise is therefore making the same claim as the conclusion and the argument is begging the question.

We still don't actually know why fruit is nutritious.

10. He's The Smartest Because He's The Most Intelligent

Scenario: He is the smartest kid in the class because, of all the children, he is the most intelligent.

In this scenario, the conclusion is that 'he is the smartest kid in the class'. The reason, or premise, we are given for this conclusion is that 'of all the children, he is the most intelligent.'



In the premise, the conclusion is restated in a different way and we are given no independent reason to believe that he really is 'the smartest kid in the class'. Smart and intelligent are synonyms and therefore mean the same thing. The argument is therefore begging the question.

11. Bad Drivers Don't Indicate Because All Good Drivers Indicate

Scenario: If you don't indicate when turning then you are a bad driver. All good drivers indicate.

The conclusion from the scenario is that 'if you don't indicate you are a bad driver'. The premise is that 'all good drivers indicate'. However, 'all good drivers indicate' in the premise implies that if you don't indicate you are a bad driver. If all good drivers indicate, then the only type of drivers who do not are bad drivers.

The premise, therefore, is implying the same thing as the conclusion. It is just saying it in a different way. We are not told anything more about why not indicating makes you a bad driver. Therefore, the argument is begging the question.

12. Walking Is Healthy Because It Promotes Wellness

Scenario: Walking is so healthy for you and it has amazing physical benefits. It really is an activity that promotes wellness.



In this scenario, we have two premises before the conclusion. The conclusion is walking really is an activity that promotes wellness. The two premises are walking is so healthy' and 'it has amazing physical benefits'.

The two premises are both different ways of saying the same thing as the conclusion which is that 'walking really is an activity that promotes wellness'. Therefore, in this scenario, we have not one, but two premises which already are assuming the conclusion is correct. The argument in this scenario is begging the question.

13. Vampires Are Myths Because They're In Fairytales

Scenario: Vampires are myths, they have never existed. We all know this because vampires are in Fairytales.

Vampires are the stuff of legend and have captivated people's imagination for a thousand years or more. However, in this scenario to figure out if this is a good argument, the legend must be put aside. The argument must have the proper premises for the conclusion.

The conclusion of the argument is that 'vampires are myths, they have never existed'. The premises – the reasons given to support the conclusion are: 'vampires are in fairytales'.

Claiming in the premise that vampires only exist in stories is the same thing as claiming they are a myth, as the conclusion does. Stories and myths are similar forms of fiction. As such, the premise is not giving a good reason to support the

conclusion. The premise is only restating the conclusion and is therefore begging the question.



14. She Is A Thief Because She Is A Criminal

Scenario: Officer! That woman is definitely guilty of theft. Twice she has stolen things plus she is a criminal.

In this scenario, a person is accusing a woman of theft. Their conclusion is that the woman stole something and they give two reasons or premises to support their conclusion.

However, their premises do not give us any good reasons to believe the conclusion. The premise 'twice she has stolen things' is a repetition of the conclusion and is therefore begging the question. Likewise, the second premise is also begging the question. Claiming someone is a criminal is the same thing as saying they are guilty of theft.

15. Oversleeping Is Bad Because It Has Negative Effects

Scenario: Did you know that it is bad to sleep too much? I read that people who sleep a lot can experience negative effects from oversleeping.

Often we hear health advice about sleep or nutrition and sometimes it's hard to tell facts from fiction. In this scenario, the conclusion is that 'it is bad to sleep too much'. The argument only has one premise to support the conclusion, which is

that 'people who sleep too much can experience negative effects from oversleeping'.



Experiencing the negative effects of oversleeping is a reformulation of the conclusion. We are not told what these effects are and why they are negative. Furthermore, we do not know why oversleeping causes these effects. In other words, we are not given any good reasons to support the conclusion.

In this scenario, the only thing the premise does is restate the conclusion in slightly more detail, but not enough to make it a valid reason.

More Logical Fallacies

- [Gambler's Fallacy](#)
- [Bandwagon Fallacy](#)
- [Equivocation Fallacy](#)
- [Slippery Slope Fallacy](#)
- [Red Herring Fallacy](#)
- [Ad Hominem Fallacy](#)

Conclusion

The begging the question fallacy is valuable to learn as it enhances critical thinking skills. In order to understand this fallacy, a person must understand the structure and aim of an argument. The ability to analyze arguments in this way can bring clarity and insight into otherwise confusing ideas.

Being able to recognize that the only evidence in an argument is just the conclusion stated in a more complex way or that there is no real evidence for

the conclusion, in general, is a unique skill. In today's world of increasing information from a multitude of sources, the responsibility is increasingly on the individual to sort fact from fiction.



Understanding what a genuine argument looks like, both in form and content is a vital step in thinking for oneself in the modern world.

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