



15 Slippery Slope Fallacy Examples

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A [slippery slope](#) is a logical fallacy that argues against taking a moderate course of action because it will trigger a long series of unintended and more extreme consequences.

The slippery slope fallacy is also referred to as the slippery slope argument, or the domino fallacy. Oftentimes the slippery slope argument is used to instill fear, and to deter people from doing or choosing certain actions.

Slippery slopes occur in all types of situations, and if you take a moment to reflect, you'll realize you've probably heard it without even realizing.



Slippery slope arguments typically take this structure:

“If event A occurs, that will lead to negative outcome B, which causes negative outcome C...”

In this article, we'll go over 15 scenarios of the slippery slope fallacy so you can better spot them yourself, and refrain from using them in formulating your own arguments.

Fun fact: The philosopher Alfred Sidgwick fashioned the concept of the slippery slope, though he referred to the fallacy as [“the thin edge of the wedge.”](#)

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1. Lowering The Voting Age Leads To Babies Voting

A state government is debating whether or not they should lower the voting age. A member of parliament says that if they were to allow for a



lower voting age to 17, then 16 year olds would start insisting on the right to vote! If we lower it to 17, why not 16? Before long, babies will be voting!

The member of parliament is using the slippery slope fallacy to dissuade others against lowering the voting age. He is arousing fear towards possible outlandish consequences; namely, the idea of babies voting. The issue with the slippery slope is that there is no logical argument for babies to vote.

In this scenario, we do not have sufficient evidence to state that lowering the voting age to 17 would lead to babies voting. We also lack evidence that the overton window would move and, suddenly, people would think babies voting is a good idea.

The premises themselves are thinly tied, or are not clearly causal. Therefore, it's a slippery slope argument, because it assumes much more is implicated than is the case.

Here, we can also see that slippery slope fallacies rely upon [false analogy](#): that is, it assumes there are only two options in a scenario – don't do something, or suffer an extreme potential consequence.

2. Soothing A Crying Baby Leads To Attachment Issues

Two mothers are talking about how to respond to their crying babies. The one mother advises the other that she should make sure not to pick up her baby each time they cry because then they will never learn to be independent, and will grow up to have severe attachment issues which makes it near impossible to maintain healthy romantic relationships.



When it comes to arguments in general, we should always be wary of words like ‘never’ and ‘impossible.’ However, we can also see here that the connections between the premises are weak.

We do not know for certain, and it has not been proven that responding to your baby when they are crying creates dependency issues, let alone severe attachment issues. This argument contains the slippery slope fallacy because it is assuming a causal relationship between premises that do not clearly hold that relationship.

3. Not Getting Accepted To College Will Ruin Your Life

Jason is stressed because he has a calculus test tomorrow and he doesn’t feel prepared. He’s worried that if he doesn’t get an A in calculus, he won’t get the GPA he needs to get into a top school, and then he won’t be able to find a job or earn a living.

While it might be true that if he doesn’t do well in calculus he won’t get a good GPA, the following premise (that he will not be able to find a job or earn a living) is a stretch, and simply does not follow.

Getting into a top school is not a prerequisite to make a living, and this conclusion is an extreme conclusion to make from doing poorly on one calculus test. So again, the slippery slope assumes that certain events follow without proving that it is true.

Often, parents’ concerns about their children not getting into college are also a result of the [bandwagon fallacy](#), in which all the other kids are going to college,

so they want you to go as well (or else the sky will fall in!).



4. If You Give A Mouse A Cookie

If You Give a Mouse a Cookie is a children's book written by Laura Numeroff that describes the slippery slope, and gives an illustration of the fallacy so children can understand its meaning.

The story is told in the second person, and it's about a boy who meets a mouse that asks for a cookie,

“If you give a mouse a cookie, then he's going to ask for a glass of milk. When you give him the milk, he'll probably ask you for a straw. When he's finished, he'll ask for a napkin, then...”

The idea being that by giving a mouse a cookie, you are committed to satisfying his other requests, which will inevitable flow from giving the mouse the cookie.

The issue being that these are speculations of what might occur by choosing to do one thing, and speculations do not work to make conclusive statements such as those that the slippery slope fallacies attempt to make.

5. Eating A Slice Of Pizza Leads To Weight Gain

“I really shouldn't eat this slice of pizza because if I do I'll probably lose all control and go off my diet, and then I'll keep gaining weight and eventually get diabetes”.

Of course, we know that eating one slice of pizza doesn't cause diabetes. The slippery slope in this instance concerns the person trying to dissuade

themselves from choosing to do something which they've decided against doing (i.e., going against their diet and eating the pizza.)



In the attempt to dissuade herself from going for the pizza, she is assuming that these other consequences follow from eating the one slice. There's no reason to believe that eating a single slice of pizza would have these other negative consequences. Eating a slice doesn't cause someone to stray from their diet entirely, or cause diabetes. Therefore, this argument contains a slippery slope fallacy.

6. A Friendly Teacher Leads To Obesity

When I was training to be a teacher, my supervisor used to use this phrase all the time. They would say things like “don't smile for the first 6 months” because, supposedly, smiling would show the students that you are weak and a push-over.

This assumption stretches the idea that being friendly automatically means that children will take advantage of you. Presumably, friendliness is a slippery slope to bad classroom management.

Of course, being friendly doesn't make you a push-over. It also doesn't mean that you can't control a classroom. So, here, we see an argument that doesn't support the claimed end result. It assumes a domino effect that is not borne out by logic.

7. Bad Language Leads To Bad Behavior



If you swear in front of your child, then they will learn those words and behaviours and use them at school. Eventually, swearing in front of your kids will cause them to get expelled from school and drop out.

While it's certainly not advised to swear in front of young children, to assume that swearing in front of your child will result in them dropping out of school is incorrect and a clear instance of the slippery slope fallacy. These other negative consequences (getting expelled or dropping out from school) are not implied by swearing in front of kids and is a conjecture.

8. New Laws Lead To Lost Freedom

If we begin to restrict freedom of speech, this will encourage the government to infringe upon other fundamental rights, and eventually this will result in a totalitarian state where citizens have little to no control of their lives and decisions they make.

Any restriction on the freedom of speech is concerning and demands critical attention. That said, the introduction of a single policy in and of itself does not necessarily lead to other similar policies. The slippery slope fallacy is in the assumption that introducing this policy would inevitably result in other harmful policies.

11. Privatization Of Healthcare Leads To Communism

On the American right, there is a cohort of people who accuse any government involvement in the economy as 'communism'. This commonly comes through when governments attempt to intervene in the healthcare system to lower prices and provide healthcare to all.



The claim that government intervention is a slippery slope to communism doesn't hold when even left-leaning governments in the United States and Europe are pro-market and generally of a [neoliberal](#) persuasion.

In fact, you could argue that, like most slippery slope fallacies, this argument is over-reach. People arguing against government intervention may be better off arguing about why the specific interventions presented are bad rather than throwing out [red herrings](#) about communism that are irrelevant and highly unlikely.

12. Private Participation In Healthcare Leads To Disaster

Liberals and social democrats aren't immune to constructing slippery slope fallacies either. In Australia, where I'm from, and Canada, where I now live, politicians regularly argue against the "Americanization of healthcare".

The idea here is that if the government allows any private participation in healthcare, then the healthcare system will become overly expensive and people will end up being without healthcare access.

Generally, these arguments are slippery slope fallacies because small public-private partnerships that deliver efficiencies do not represent disaster, and often even deliver lower costs for consumers. Nevertheless, this argument is put forward to instil fear in people that one small change will lead down the track to an entire dismantlement of the 'healthcare for all' models of modern wealthy social democracies.

13. Tuition Fee Increases Lead To Collapse Of Universities



If we continue to increase college tuition, nobody will be able to afford to go to school and pursue a higher education.

The increase in tuition will therefore result in fewer university students and graduates, and ultimately it will degrade the standard of education across the nation and people will be less educated.

Increasing college tuition does make it increasingly difficult for students to attend college. Whether this would definitively result in fewer college graduates is not confirmed, though it *might* be true.

The further claim that the increase in tuition leads to the degradation of education as a whole doesn't work, since there's no reason to assume this would be the case. The slippery slope assumes this ultimate negative consequence of a poorer standard of education without providing reason to believe this would be true.

14. Getting Braces Leads To More Jobs

Getting braces for your teeth should be covered by the government because people need to have straight teeth if they want to get a job.

If people don't have straight teeth then they won't be able to get a job and the unemployment rate will skyrocket causing homelessness and a society fraught with civil unrest.



The idea that not having perfectly straight teeth prevents a person from getting hired is false and nonsensical. It's true that there could be instances where someone didn't get a job because they had crooked teeth; but on average, this is not the case and we cannot derive a general rule about it.

Considering that the main premise doesn't hold, the following premises are similarly untenable as they are based on a false assumption.

15. Paying Doctors Less Leads To Collapse Of The Healthcare System

If we pay doctors less, this will discourage people from pursuing medical degrees, which will result in fewer competent doctors and the healthcare system will collapse.

The first premise in this argument, "if we pay doctors less, then this will discourage people from pursuing medical degrees," could be true. While this might be the case, the further implications (fewer competent doctors, the collapse of the healthcare system) are not necessary or inevitable outcomes of reducing doctors' salaries.

The slippery slope fallacy attempts to reject a course of action by arguing that we would be committed to a slew of other outcomes if we were to pursue it. The issue is that the slippery slope does not prove or give sufficient evidence to conclude that these further negative outcomes follow from the initial event (think of the domino effect.)

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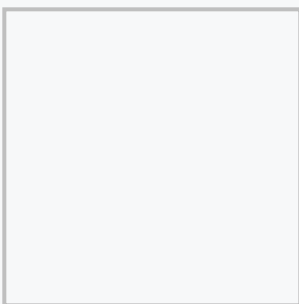
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Conclusion

As we have seen, the slippery slope fallacy is regularly used to instill or provoke fear to prevent others from choosing to do things, or to persuade or dissuade others. The fearmongering, or the attempt to instill fear without providing sufficient reason is the aim of most slippery slope-style arguments. Hopefully by understanding how the slippery slope fallacy functions, you can avoid these missteps yourself, and you won't buy into arguments that use this fallacy to convince people of their beliefs.

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