

Honest or Dishonest Debate Tactics

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Most arguments and debates are one dishonest tactic after another. Although I am fond of intellectually-honest debate, about 90% to 95% of the statements made by my opponents to prove that I am wrong have been of the intellectually-dishonest variety. The same thing applies across the board. Almost all arguments consist of one intellectually-dishonest debate tactic after another. The general failure to recognize these tactics as intellectually-dishonest and invalid are one of the reasons for irrational outcomes in a debate forum.

Lest I be accused of intellectually-dishonest debate myself, I hereby explain the difference:

There are only two intellectually-honest debate tactics:

1. Pointing out errors or omissions in your opponent's facts
2. Pointing out errors or omissions in your opponent's logic

That is it! Simple! The dishonest list is much longer and I will get to that in a moment.

Rules of debating:

All other debate tactics are intellectually dishonest. Generally, the federal rules of evidence of our courts attempt to make the argument or debate intellectually honest. Roberts Rules of Order, which were written by Henry Martyn Robert, are used to govern debate in many organization meetings. For example, one of Robert's Rules, Number 43 says: "It is not allowable to arraign the motives of a member, but the nature or consequences of a measure may be condemned in strong terms. It is not the man, but the measure, that is the subject of debate."

Some debate organizations have rules like the Code of the Debater from the University of Virginia which says among other things:

1. I will research my topic and know what I am talking about.
2. I will be honest about my arguments and evidence and those of others.

Federal Rules of Evidence:

The Federal Rules of Evidence are also excellent. Here is an excellent summary of them in the form of a Wikipedia list of objections to questions that lawyers can make in court. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_objections_\(law\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_objections_(law)) Some Federal Rules of Evidence are technical and therefore do not apply outside of a court room, like "beyond the scope" which refers to the fact that in a cross examination, you cannot ask a question that does not relate to the other lawyer's questions of the same witness during his direct examination.

Politicians and con men:

Intellectually-dishonest debate tactics are typically employed by dishonest politicians, lawyers of guilty parties, dishonest salespeople, cads, CULTS, and others who are attempting to perpetrate a FRAUD.

Here is a list of the intellectually-dishonest debate tactics.

1. **Name calling:** debater tries to diminish the argument of his opponent by calling the opponent a name that is subjective and unattractive; for example, CULT members and bad real estate gurus typically warn the targets of their frauds that “dream stealers” will try to tell them the cult or guru is giving them bad advice; name calling is only intellectually dishonest when the name in question is ill defined or is so subjective that it tells the listener more about the speaker than the person being spoken about; there is nothing wrong with calling your opponent a name that is relevant and objectively defined. Especially if he has called himself this name or the name is associated with what he is saying. Cult example: someone is saying "...limited atonement..." then you know that this comes under the heading of one of the points in TULIP in Calvinism. So calling that person a "Calvinist" is perfectly alright. However when you call him a "Calvinist" and he turns around and calls you an "Arminian" when they have not defined anything "Arminian" then that is intellectually dishonest. He is calling you that just because you called him a "Calvinist" is not a good reason for him calling you an "Arminian". It is a faulty logic that.

There is nothing wrong with calling someone, for example, a liar when he is, in fact, a liar. Don't tell me it's ad hominem. That's #50. You can't just say it though. You must prove it. An example with a Cultist quotes the Bible WRONG and you call him out on that quoting the Bible RIGHT or "verbatim" then you can call him a LIAR. I have been told when quoting the Bible "verbatim" that that was my interpretation! This is another example of an intellectually dishonest tactic.

2. **Changing the subject:** debater is losing so he tries to redirect the attention of the audience to another subject area where he thinks he can look better relative to the person he is debating, but admits to no change of subject and pretends to be refuting the original on-subject statement of his opponent. This is done in a circle in many CULTS. Taking for example our above Calvinistic Cult; when they cannot answer to the Bible proof that there is no such thing as "limited atonement" they shift to the next point in their pentagram points of pagan fatalism: "TULIP" which is "Irresistible Grace". They do this for every one of their five points and circle around back to the first point.
3. **Why, Where, What, When, Which, Who & How:**
 - a. **Stating WHY you are wrong without stating WHERE you are wrong.** In other words, they say you are wrong because, but what follows is not identification of errors or omissions in your facts or logic, but rather deficiencies in your background or possible bias. Essentially, these all say that the opponent is prohibited from commenting on the topic in question because of what's in their resume or not in their resume or because of some possible bias. This happens when debating the Bible issue against Bible Critics which are usually highly degreed PhD or Masters.

- b. **Questioning the motives of the opponent:** this is like tactic number 2 changing the subject; a typical tactic used against critics is to say, “They’re just trying to sell newspapers” or books. Questioning motives is not always wrong; only when it is used to prove the opponent’s facts or logic are wrong then it is invalid. If my facts or logic are wrong, my motive may be the reason. But let’s cut out the middleman of why my facts or logic are wrong and just point out exactly what is the error. Pointing out the suspicious motive obliquely admits there is no error; it’s just an attempt to insinuate an error by innuendo. Don’t say why I’m wrong; say where I’m wrong.

 - c. **Stereotyping:** debater “proves” his point about a particular person by citing a stereotype that supposedly applies to the group that opponent is a member of. For example, Professor Dr. Smellfungus of Penknife Institute of Theological Universal and Technological Etymology (PITUTE) accuses me of not having his high level degree to deal with the subject when confronted with his dishonest debating tactics saying that I am NOT a "College Professor" and do not know "Greek and Hebrew" as he has and then stereotype me that I am a KJO (King James Only) or a Ruckmanite. If I am wrong in my reasoning or my facts it is because of an error or omission in his facts or logic; not because he is a college professor or because I may or may not be from those groups. Conspicuous by its absence in the professor’s protests is any evidence of errors or omissions in my analysis of the subject in debate.

 - d. **My resume’s bigger than yours.** All the more reason why you ought to be able to cite specific errors or omissions in my facts or logic, yet still you cannot. Your resume being bigger than mine suggests a possible reason why I might make a mistake, but that does not absolve you from having to point out the specific error or omission in facts or logic that I made. The fact that I might make a mistake because of insufficient training or experience is not proof that I did make a mistake, and trying to imply this is just being dishonest.

 - e. **Your resume is not big enough** for you to comment on this and my resume is irrelevant to whether I can ban you from the discussion by pointing out the inadequacy of yours. This is an admitted know-nothing banning you from the discussion on the grounds that you do not know enough. Again this is not dealing with the facts or logic presented.
4. **Citing irrelevant facts or logic:** this is another form of tactic Number 2: changing the subject; this can be done by alteration of the facts where in the CULT you simply alter the Bible passage in line with what you believe by using Greek or Hebrew syntax, etymology or grammar; then proceed to use that alteration to prove what you believe! Not only is this irrelevant facts; but it is extreme intellectually-dishonest debate tactics. This also causes a circular faulty logic that should be pointed out as a dishonest debating tactic.
5. **False premise:** debater makes a statement that assumes some other fact has already been proven when it has not; in court, such a statement will be objected to successfully by opposing counsel on the grounds that it “assumes facts not in evidence.” This is done in debating the Bible issue where it is assumed that "oldest manuscripts are the best" and that the "shorter readings are best" and

that only the "original manuscripts were inspired", or that "God cannot inspire a translation", etc. These are assumptions and unprovable as facts. More importantly it can be demonstrated factual that "oldest does NOT imply best" and that "shorter does not imply best" and that there are NO "original manuscripts" and that "God DID inspire translations" among other things.

The opposite is also intellectually dishonest: ignoring facts that already are in evidence. Here is another example where the Bible corrector will ignore the facts that the Majority Text (5000) agrees with the Antiochian Text base and the readings in the King's Bible 97% of the time while Alexandrian Text base used are 3 manuscripts that do NOT agree with one another 30% of the time; but account for all but ONE English translation. Where the Alexandrian Text base contains Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha books as part of the text base but are different in each account.

6. **Hearsay:** debater cites something he heard, but has not confirmed through his own personal observation or research from reliable sources. An example of this is "the original King James Bible has the Apocrypha in it as part of the Bible"... This is hearsay; and incorrect. The original King James Bible had the Apocrypha BETWEEN the Testaments segregated and called Apocryphal Books. This also proves another problematic hearsay: "the King James translators did not have access to the latest findings and textual discoveries". What they mean is they did not have access to the Alexandrian Text base. HOWEVER including the Apocryphal Books between the testaments shows that they actually DID have access to that text base. The Apocryphal Books are found in the Alexandrian text base favored manuscripts along with Pseudepigrapha books.
7. **Unqualified expert opinion:** debater gives or cites an apparently expert opinion which is not from a qualified expert; in court, an expert must prove his qualifications and be certified by the judge before he can give an opinion. This happens all the time in dealing with the debate of the inclusion of 1 John 5:7 to the text base as found in the King's Bible. The qualified experts always seem to MISS the "church fathers" quotes of the verse. They are NOT qualified because they are NOT experts with expert opinions. Example: Dr. Smellfungus an expert in etymology, syntax, and linguistics and can speak and write fluently in Hebrew, Greek, Chaldean and Latin is not an expert in Theology or Biblical Studies on Doctrine.
8. **Sloganeering:** Debater uses a slogan rather than using facts or logic. Slogans are vague sentences or phrases that derive their power from rhetorical devices like alliteration, repetition, cadence, or rhyming; Rich Dad Poor Dad's "Don't work for money, make money work for you," is a classic example. Coaches frequently rely on clichés, a less rhetorical form of slogan, to deflect criticism. Jesse Jackson was the champ of this form of dishonesty, e.g., "Up with hope. Down with dope." Slogans can be useful at times but NOT in debate forums.
9. **The motive's end justifies a dishonest means:** (the end justifies the means) the debater admits he is lying or using fallacious logic, but excuses this on the grounds that he is motivating the audience to accomplish a good thing and that to that end he is justifying an intellectually-dishonest means. Bad real estate gurus use this one a lot. Many of the Cults use this to weasel their way through a debate regardless how wrong they are.

10. **Cult of personality:** debater attempts to make the likability of each debate opponent the focus of the debate because he believes he is more likable than the opponent. They will eventually call me rude or not likable or too hard. Yes, FACTS are stubborn things! Regardless, whether you like a debater or not has no bearings on the subject of the debate. Facts and or logic used are NOT a personality contest.
11. **Vagueness:** debater seems to cite facts or logic, but his terms are so vague that no facts or logic are actually presented. The usage in a Bible debate for a subject where unclear or vague passages are used as proof texts; when there are much clearer passages that are clear and concise and prove he is wrong. This happens with the CULT of those that think you can Lose Your Eternal Salvation. A proof text in the book of Hebrews, James, Matthew or Acts are usually vague or at best unclear. Where Romans 8:35-39 clearly resolve that issue; as well as 1 John 5:9-13 also clearly resolve that issue. You never interpret a clear passage by an unclear one. That is intellectually-dishonest!
12. **Playing on widely held fantasies or fears:** debater offers facts or logic that support the fantasies or fears of the audience thereby triggering powerful desires to believe that override normal desire for truth or logic.
13. **Claiming privacy with regard to claims about self:** debater makes favorable claims about himself, but when asked for details or proof of the claims, refuses to provide any claiming privacy; true privacy is not mentioning them to begin with; bragging then refusing to prove the claims is silly on its face and it is a rather self-servingly selective use of the right of privacy.
14. **Scapegoating:** debater blames problems on persons other than the audience; this is a negative version of playing on widely-held fantasies; it plays on widely-held animosities or dislikes. Hitler's blaming the Jews for everything that was wrong was the classic example. Cults blame the Bible and then correct the Bible because it is WRONG. But it is NOT wrong; they are.
15. **Arousing envy:** debater attempts to get the audience to dislike his opponent because the audience is envious of something that can be attributed to the opponent.
16. **Redefining words:** debater uses a word that helps him, but that does not apply, by redefining it to suit his purposes, like Leftists calling government spending "investments." or "life" and "choice" are words that have been warped by abortion antagonists. The Bible critic will alter the Bible to suit his believe and then prove his believe by what he just corrected in the Bible. Usually done by redefining words using the Greek or Hebrew etymology, syntax, grammar, usually using a lexicon or Strong's Concordance and rarely do these people actually know Greek or Hebrew. If they did they should know that translations do not have to do with ONE word in a sentence; context must be dealt with at the same time.
17. **Citing over-valued credentials:** debater accurately claims something about himself or something he wants to prove, but the claim made is one that attempts to get the audience to over-rely on a credential that is or may be over-valued by the audience; for example, some con men falsely point

to a College or professor's position on the subject as evidence of approval by that Collage or professor of the con man's usage of a verse to prove a point.

18. **Claiming membership in a group affiliated with audience members:** debater claims to be a member of a group that members of the audience are also members of; like a religion, ethnic group, veterans group, and so forth; the debater's hope is that the audience members will let their guard down with regard to facts and logic as a result and that they will give their alleged fellow group member the benefit of any doubt or even my-group-can-do-no-wrong immunity, also called "affinity fraud". This happens in all CULT circles.
19. **Taking a quote out of context** or "cherry picking:" debater taking a quote out of context and misapplying it to something ELSE to prove his point. A quote "out of context" should be applied TO its context even if NOT quoting that context. Example: Saying that "born of water" means water baptism from John 3:5, "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." when the context clearly shows that "born of water" is the physical birth: It is in response to: John 3:4, "Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" and explained in: John 3:6, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." There is NO water baptism in the context! It is the "born of water" that is equated to "born of the flesh is flesh".

Taking a quote out of context is only wrong when the lack of the context misrepresents the author's position. Any debater who claims a quote misrepresents the author's position must cite the one or more additional quotes from the same work that supply the missing context and thereby reveal the true meaning of the author, a meaning which is very different from the meaning conveyed by the original quote that they complained about.

Merely pointing out that the quote is not the entire text proves nothing. Indeed, if a search of the rest of the work reveals no additional quotes that show the original quote was misleading, the accusation itself is dishonest.

"Cherry Picking" means nothing more than a person has taken one or more items from a longer list. The sneer with which the phrase is used implies that the items chosen were less worthy than one or more that were not chosen. Probably, it would be hard to arrive at a consensus on what should be in and what should be out.

20. **Straw man:** debater attacks an argument that is easy to refute, but which is also an argument that no one has made in the debate. Obama can hardly get through a paragraph without committing this violation. Straw-man arguments are easy to spot. They almost all use the phrase "those who." The antidote to the straw-man tactic? Demand the attacker identify one or more of "those" by name. If he or she fails to do so, you are free to state that their implication that such people ever existed is a lie. Example: "Those who believe in the Trinity believe there are three gods" Which is a LIE! That is a straw man with no name.

21. **Rejecting facts or logic as mere opinion**, preference, personal taste, or like: It is true that everyone is entitled to their own opinion. But everyone is not entitled to their own facts or logic. Nor is anyone allowed to characterize a factual/logical argument as merely the opinion, preference, personal taste, or like of the opponent. Facts are facts. $2 + 2 = 4$ is not my opinion. It is a fact. When quoting a verse in the Bible I have been told that that was just my opinion. Yet I just quoted the verse verbatim.

Frequently, when I explain one of my conclusions with facts and logic, my debate opponent dismisses those facts and logic as merely “your opinion.” That is a lie. Rich Dad Poor Dad author Robert Kiyosaki says incorporating enables you to deduct a vacation to Hawaii as a board meeting on your federal income taxes. He’s wrong. It’s not my opinion. It’s the Internal Revenue Code Section 162(a) which you can read for yourself at http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/html/uscode26/usc_sec_26_00000162---000-.html.

Whether you can deduct a trip to Hawaii has nothing to do with whether you are incorporated. And you cannot deduct a vacation. It has to be an “ordinary and necessary business” expense. Travel expenses which are “lavish or extravagant” are explicitly not deductible according to IRC §162(a)(2). The fact that Kiyosaki and his CPA co-author differ from my statements on that subject are not matters of opinion. They are either lying or incompetent. I am accurately describing the law.

22. **Argument from intimidation**: The essential characteristic of the Argument from Intimidation is its appeal to moral self-doubt and its reliance on the fear, guilt or ignorance of the victim. It is used in the form of an ultimatum demanding that the victim renounce a given idea without discussion, under threat of being considered morally unworthy. The pattern is always: “Only those who are evil (dishonest, heartless, insensitive, ignorant, etc.) can hold such an idea.” In cult circles this is done by the usage of the word “heretic” or “heresy” without any reason given.

23. **Theatrical fake laughter** or sighs or eye rolls: This can be wordless, but it says “What you just said is so ridiculously wrong that we must laugh at it.” It is intellectually dishonest and devoid of any intelligence, facts, or logic. These gestures and noises are devoid of facts or logic, yet they are offered as evidence that what the opponent just said is so ridiculous that no facts or logic need be offered. They are attempts to admit inadmissible evidence under the excited utterances exception in the Federal Rules of Evidence, even if the perpetrator could not articulate it that way.

24. **Innuendo**: an indirect remark, gesture, or reference, usually implying something derogatory.

25. **Insinuation**: a sly, subtle, and usually derogatory reference.

26. **Halo effect claims of expertise**: Implying you are an expert in X when your actual expertise is far narrower than X or even unrelated to X. This is a, “You know I’m right because I’m really smart.”

The halo effect is the tendency of people who do not know a person to assume if they are good at

A—the first impression on the other person—they must be good at everything.

Example: A high school graduate movie star with no training or expertise in government policy pontificating about government policy are another example of persons using their success in one realm to imply high expertise in an unrelated field.

27. **Peer approval of subjective opinion:** “Proving” correctness of a subjective statement by citing the approval of political allies in the same subject—so-called peer review in academia. Peer approval has value when it relates to objective standards like those in mathematics, chemistry, and physics. Such peers check the accuracy of calculations, the cleanliness of laboratories, and whether they can replicate the results in their own experiments.

But peer review is of little probative (proving) value when it relates to subjective areas like sociology, much of economics, or women’s studies where the peers in question, and indeed the whole field or large portions of it, have a particular political agenda. What is considered correct academic teaching in high schools is determined by long-term, circular, self-reinforcing, peer group-think unaffected by results achieved by their students.

Meanwhile, at those very same high schools, numerous coaches and athletic directors decide what is correct by whether it produces victory in athletic competition against other high schools. Global warming advocates are big on using this. I heard one opponent scientist observe dryly when hit with the global-warming “consensus” argument, “In science, we do not take a poll to ascertain the truth.” $2 + 2 = 4$ no matter how many people say it is 5. By the way, the Global warming/climate change theory is not based on science. It is based on a computer model. There is such a thing as a model error, which does not require scientific proof. See the Wikipedia article on Butterfly Effect. In Latin, this logic fallacy is called Argumentum ad numerum or Argumentum ad populum.

28. **Ill-defined words or phrases:** Cults do this all the time. They will redefine a word out of context produce a different meaning based on their belief; then use this ill-defined word or phrase to prove what they believe. These words have little or no meaning therefore cannot convey facts or logic therefore they are intellectually-dishonest debate tactics when used to argue a point.
29. **Finding small error:** Citing a slight error or typo as evidence that everything the opponent says is false or that the opponent is “unprofessional” or incompetent (name calling, ill-defined words, typo). This is done in the Bible debate by saying that the King James Bible has errors and the editions had to correct those errors. This is a case of straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel. This “error” as a typographical error by the printer or a font change is a gnat along side the camel error found in all modern versions in 1 John 4:3 or Luke 4:8.
30. **Protest-too-much quantity of sources:** This is citing an overly long list of legal or other purportedly-authoritative citations to prove the opponent is wrong. For example, people who claim income taxes are unconstitutional typically cite a book-length list of court decisions and statute sections to “prove” they are right. In fact, income taxes are constitutional because of the XVI Amendment to the Constitution as upheld by numerous court decisions over 102 years that

have dismissed the long lists of legal citations as “frivolous,” typically fining the litigant for pursuing the suit at all.

Actor Wesley Snipes went to prison after failing to pay his income taxes on the grounds that they were unconstitutional. Part of the trick of this debate tactic is to get the opponent to spend days researching all the citations. This is akin to #44 badgering, i.e., trying to win the argument by attacking again and again with the same argument in an effort to wear the opponent down or repeating something over and over in the hope that raw repetition will displace the truth.

31. **Accusing opponent of being overly “simplistic”** where some cults see salvation as many steps and works and doing certain things to merit salvation. They argue that faith alone in Christ is just “too easy” so it must be wrong.

With one word, it preempts the intellectual high ground without offering anything substantive. Before an answer can be too simple, it must first be wrong. But often the fact that some explanation seems too simple becomes a substitute for showing that it is wrong. Virtually any answer to virtually any question can be made to seem simplistic by expanding the question to unanswerable dimensions and then deriding the now inadequate answer as simplistic.”

32. **Assertion of non-existent “rights”** in some Cults they have a right into heaven because of how good they are; in others they have a right into heaven because they are part of an elite elected group.
33. **Claiming hyperbole** is “pedantic” or “pedant:” which is: A person who overrates the importance of minor or trivial points of learning; displaying a scholarship lacking in judgment or sense of proportion. The implication of this debate tactic is that all characterizations of large data sets must be stated in percentages to the third or fourth decimal point. Of course, such data is not available in most cases and would take considerable effort to dig up if it did exist. Hyperbole exists to deal with such situations. Hyperbole is also a distinctly American form of humor. The British, in contrast, generally use understatement to achieve humorous effect in similar situations.
34. **Repeating sarcasm without indicating it was sarcasm.** One of the cardinal rules when you give an unvideoed deposition is never use sarcasm. Sarcasm is a statement which is the opposite of what you believe. The key is that you say it in a tone of voice that reveals how stupid a statement you think it is. The phrase, “Yeah, right!” is the classic example of sarcasm but it does not mean so much that your opponent is right nor does it imply that you think he is right. Online text debating is also not a good place for sarcasm unless it is indicted as such.

The dishonest debater will quote what you said in the text transcript and leave out the sarcastic tone of voice. The opponent asks in the text if you believe the sun rises in the west and you say, sarcastically, “Yeah, right.” Then in a later statement types that part of the definition making it sound like you agreed with the statement that the sun rises in the West.

In Asia, they have no such thing as sarcasm and take all statements literally.

35. **Sunk cost.** Decisions should be based and evaluated on what you know now, where you are now, where you want to go, and what the best way to get there is—only. Taking into account past expenditures of money or effort is flat wrong and utterly irrelevant to decisions. This concept is also embodied in phrases like “water over the dam,” “water under the bridge,” “Don’t cry over spilled milk,” “what’s done is done,” “throwing good money after bad,” and “cut your losses.”
36. **Both sides of the story.** The media is trained to get “both sides of the story.” And they do mechanically, mindlessly. But what law of nature says there are only, or always, two sides to a story? Sometimes there is one; sometimes two; sometimes more than two. When this is used in an intellectually-dishonest way, it is typically to elevate a bogus argument to equality with a valid one. You see this with the anti-vaccine movement, global warming, urban legends, and superstition. Junk science and urban legends do not deserve equal time on the stage of public debate just because of the notion that there are only “two sides to every story.”
37. **Political correctness.** I hesitate to cite this as a debate tactic because it is more accurately described as a refusal to debate. Al Gore recently said regarding an argument against his global warming theory that “the debate is over.” Gee. Who is the one who gets to decide that? Is he some kind of king or pope who gets to order the rest of us around? Doesn’t our constitution, including the part about free speech, prohibit such a censor in chief?

The politically correct have a list of statements that, to them, cannot be debated. If you say anything that conflicts with the list, the politically correct denounce your ideas and you in the most extreme ways alleging racism, idiocy, “hate speech,” etc. The vehemence of their language is exceeded only by the certainty of their conviction that they are 100.0000% right. Of course, it’s easier to be certain when you only have to check a list or catechism of political-correctness than when you have to figure stuff out using facts and logic. The realm of the politically correct is a facts- and logic-free zone.

38. **Mockery.** 1. Derision; ridicule. 2. An absurd misrepresentation or imitation of something. No facts or logic being presented. As in “that is a stupid analogy” or “anyone that thinks like that should be horsewhipped” or “what a stupid thing to say”...
39. **Dismissing your failure to abandon your position** because you “just don’t get it.” Enron, was famous for using this one when people said their business model made no sense. Actually, the critics were right. Enron went bankrupt and its CEO, who claimed he got it, got 24 years in prison for conspiracy, insider trading, making false statements to auditors, and securities fraud. See the Wikipedia write-up on the documentary about Enron called “The Smartest Guys in the Room.”
40. **‘Everything you say is wrong and everything I say is right** because you support [the King James Only] or [Ruckmanites] – because you quote only the King James Bible.

The user of the tactic make a typically illogical, emotional, and/or intellectually-dishonest

argument, then, upon being challenged with facts and logic, changes the subject to “no translation can be inspired” or “there are errors in all translations” etc.

They allege the target supported one or more of those persons (or positions), that the user of the tactic did not, and therefore the user is always right about everything and the target is always wrong about everything. The key point is not to fall for that and start defending the Perfect Holy Bible: the King James Bible and stay on point.

The Reconstructionist use intellectually-dishonest tactics on almost every occasion with zero percentage of facts or logic in their arguments. This is probably because they must prove God lost His words and requires sinful man to reconstruct them and that they should decide how to go about to do this. Their position can NOT tolerate facts or sound logic, so they have to be the masters of deceit, lies and trickery.

41. **Shouting down, jamming, or intimidating the opponent.** This is another dishonest-debate tactic used to intimidate the opponent who is trying to run a peaceful debate.
42. **Badgering.** This is repeating the same intellectually-dishonest debate tactic again and again in an attempt to wear out the opponent. There seems to be an implicit notion that if you say the same incorrect thing over and over enough times, that makes it true or that by saying it enough times you can make an incorrect statement have more weight in the debate. Toddler children are big on this.

It may work, but it shouldn't, and you shouldn't use it for that purpose. Facts and logic should be the only basis for changing one's mind. There is a Latin phrase for this: Argumentum ad nauseam.

43. **Claiming well-defined words are vague or ill-defined.** This is a mirror image of #30. It is a favorite of those who do wrong, but seek to avoid the consequences or responsibility by asserting that what is right or wrong is merely a matter of each individual's opinion. Try that in court and see how far its gets you. This is also akin to #22: rejecting facts or logic as mere opinion.
44. **Rhetorical question.** This is a statement posing as a question. Typically, the questioner already knows the answer; often everyone within earshot knows the answer. Pretending the statement is a question is dishonest.

If the questioner wants to make a statement, he should stand up like a man and do so. Often, the format is such that the questioner is only allowed to ask questions, but wants to make a statement and tries to get around the questions-only rule by phrasing the statement as a question, albeit one that he and everyone else already knows the answer to.

In other cases, the person is allowed to make a statement, but the statement being made is inappropriate. Here is one definition from the Urban Dictionary: “A question asked in which one already knows the answer to not expecting reply; simply to be rude, to annoy you, or for some

other odd reason.” And here is one from UsingEnglish.com: “The speaker (of the rhetorical question) is not looking for an answer but is making some kind of a point, as in an argument.”

45. **Ignorance is not an opinion.** It is akin to #22. That is rejecting facts and logic as mere opinion. This is claiming that, despite an absence of facts or logic, your position is nevertheless valid as an opinion. No, it isn't. It's just an attempt to dishonestly spin your failure to do your homework or your refusal or inability to apply logic to your facts. The issue is whether pertinent facts or opinions are available; not whether you choose to ignore them.
46. **'Lawyering.'** The purpose of debate is to ascertain the truth. The purpose of “lawyering” is to win the case by whatever means will accomplish that end. Famed Harvard Law professor Alan Dershowitz said, “When the truth hurts my client, my job is to suppress the truth.”

As you know, many, not all, lawyers will use every trick in the book to win for their side even if their side is guilty or liable: obfuscation, demagoguing, asking questions they know are not allowed then saying “withdrawn” after the judge sustains an objection against them, “ringing” improper “bells” that cannot be “unrung” in spite of the judge telling the jury to disregard the words the offending lawyer or witness just spoke.

In short, “lawyering” as used in this context, means using any illegal, unethical, illogical, dishonest, confusing, distracting, delaying, etc. trick they can think of to prevent the truth or logic from prevailing. When I am not in authority over the debate in question, I leave. When I am in authority, as at my Facebook wall, I delete the post in question and may block the poster from posting in the future. Debates that I participate in are searches for the truth and nothing else. If you try to “lawyer”—win, rather than figure out the truth—either I'm leaving or you are.

47. **Insufficiently-supported slippery slope or domino argument.** The slippery-slope or domino argument says that doing A will inevitably lead to B where B is agreed to be bad. The domino effect in logic assumes A will lead to B and therefore assumes A is also bad. Assumptions are neither fact nor logic and therefore should be avoided as an intellectually-dishonest debate tactic.
48. **Reversing cause and effect or confusing correlation with causation.** People sometimes say that A caused B when in fact B caused A. For example, opponents of global warming say that the miniscule rise of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere in the 20th century did not cause the world to warm slightly, the warming caused the rise in carbon dioxide.

“Post hoc” ergo “propter hoc” means “After which therefore because of which” in Latin. It is a well-known logic fallacy. Another similar phrase “cum hoc” ergo “propter hoc” means “with which therefore because of which” means almost the same thing.

It can also be stated as coincidence is not causation. A famous cultural example of this is in the Alfred Hitchcock movie *The Birds*. In that movie, a woman visits a small town. While she is there, the birds in the town suddenly start attacking the people. Briefly, there is talk that since it

never happened before she came, she must have caused it.

49. **Attempts to ban ad hominem attacks.** Saying ad hominem attacks are not allowed is invalid as a blanket statement. Conflicts of interest are generally required to be disclosed when they might affect the objectivity of a person giving expert opinion or sitting in judgment.

Facts that impeach a witness are always admissible in court and the Federal Rules of Evidence are a great set of rules designed to prevent intellectually-dishonest debate tactics. To impeach a witness means to prove he or she has not always been truthful. Ad hominem attacks are perfectly legitimate, honest debate tactics when the Federal Rules of Evidence permit them and the nature of the attack is pertinent to the topic.

Trying to ban “demeaning” is the same thing. It is nothing but a pejorative word for criticizing someone. There is nothing wrong with accurate, relevant criticism. Inaccurate criticism may be slander or libel. Failure to criticize when criticism is warranted is sinning by silence when you should protest.

50. **Tu quoque or appeal to hypocrisy.** This says your argument is wrong because you have previously spoken or acted inconsistently with it. For example, if a person whose body mass index is 27 says that for good health you should keep your body mass index below 25, they are correct. The fact that they have not complied with that medical advice is irrelevant to whether it is correct advice. Tu quoque is Latin for “you, too.”

51. **Denouncing refusal to compromise per se.** This is a recurring theme today by Democrats with regard to any issue where Republicans do not vote the way the Democrats want. Splitting the difference is not morally superior to sticking to your position. If that rule prevailed, shrewd negotiators would always make extreme demands such that splitting the difference would give them everything they really wanted.

The valid question is what is the right thing to do and the answer should be arrived at based on facts and logic. The starting position of any participant in the debate is irrelevant. There is no debate “law of gravity” that says it is wrong to refuse to move closer to your opponent’s position.

Also called Argument to moderation (Latin: argumentum ad temperantiam; also known as middle ground, false compromise, gray fallacy and the golden mean fallacy) is an informal fallacy which says the truth is a compromise between two opposite positions.

52. **Argumentum ad antiquitatem.** Saying some practice is right because “it’s always been done that way.” Or has been done that way for a long time. That is irrelevant as to whether it is right or not.
53. **So what?** This is a universal, all-purpose put down. It implies that the evidence you just submitted was irrelevant. It tries to put you on the defensive by demanding you prove the relevance of what you just said. It contains no facts or logic, just a conclusory accusation.

If the evidence present is irrelevant, you are welcome to say that, but be prepared to prove it with facts and logic. In a court room, the lawyer whose question is accused of being irrelevant can usually get the objection overruled by saying “goes to impeach the witness” or “inconsistent with a prior statement” or whatever other legitimate evidence the information in question provides.

Who cares? is another variation of this, implying no one but the speaker. Prove it.

54. **Conclusory statements.** This is a conclusion statement masquerading as evidence to prove the conclusion in question. You don't prove a defendant is guilty by merely saying he's guilty.
55. **Sour grapes.** In an old fable by Aesop, a fox noticed a bunch of grapes hanging on a vine. After several failed attempts to reach the grapes, he gave up and insisted that he didn't want them anyway because they were probably sour. It means putting down something and spinning it as less of a failure when the real source of the negative spin is because the speaker can't have it or tried to get it and failed or failed to even try.
56. **Rejecting a best practice on philosophical grounds.** Different people have different philosophies about how to do things. But best practices are best practices. For example, the best practice for treating a simple bone fracture is to set it so the bones are aligned and connected in the normal healthy position then put a cast on it for three weeks or so. A doctor who rejects that saying his “philosophy” is to do nothing and let nature take care of it is nothing but an incompetent who is committing malpractice.
57. **Claiming an intellectually-dishonest debate tactic** is okay because the person using it is not debating you. If I say X is true, and you say it is not, you are debating me.
58. **Claiming to “disagree” with non-opinion statements.** Users of intellectually-dishonest arguments often claim they just disagree and they are entitled to do so in all cases.

In libel law, there is a distinct line between opinion and statements of fact. Indeed, proving to the court that what you said was mere opinion—like a restaurant review—means the defendant wins the case.

But if the contested statement is one of fact—like Jones is a convicted felon—when, in fact, Jones is not a convicted felon—the defendant loses the case. Claiming it was just his opinion that Jones was a felon won't work as a defense.

Neither facts nor logic nor conclusions reached using facts and logic and containing no errors or omissions can be “disagreed” with. The debate opponent must show the error or omission in the other's facts or logic. Anything else is intellectually-dishonest and therefore invalid.

59. **Nothing new.** When Teddy Kennedy ran for President, his killing of Mary Jo Kopechne the night of the Apollo 11 moon landing came up. “Nothing new,” dismissed his aides. Nothing new was needed. He was the scum of the earth and the Kopechne killing was a large piece of evidence that

proved that.

Obama dismissed Netanyahu's speech to Congress in 3/15 as "nothing new." There's nothing new in $2+2=4$, but that doesn't mean that $2+2=5$. The question is whether the accusation being dismissed as old is accurate and relevant to the current topic. There is no statute of limitations in debate.

60. **You commit** [*insert dishonest debate tactic here*] **all the time**. Fox News gets this accusation all the time—lying is what they are accused of. I get name-calling and such accusations occasionally. My response is the same as Fox's. Give me an example so we can set the record straight. None is forthcoming. The "logic" of it seems to be if you say "all the time," you are thereby absolved from having to prove the accusation. In fact, if it is so frequent, it should be easy to come up with an example. The fact that you cannot come up with even a single one proves the accusation is false.
61. **False choice**. Your opponent says there are only two choices: A and B, and since A is wrong, you have to agree that B—his choice—is the best choice. Obama did this with the Iran nuclear weapons negotiations alleging the only alternative was war and war was out of the question. In fact an Israeli-style air attack was also a choice—the best one.
62. **Assuming facts not in evidence**. This is in the Federal Rules of Evidence. Wikipedia has an excellent article on this. It's under another name: "false dilemma." Here is their first sentence:

A false dilemma (also called false dichotomy, false binary, black-and-white thinking, bifurcation, denying a conjunct, the either-or fallacy, fallacy of exhaustive hypotheses, the fallacy of false choice, the fallacy of the false alternative, or the fallacy of the excluded middle) is a type of informal fallacy that involves a situation in which only limited alternatives are considered, when in fact there is at least one additional option.
63. **Ignoring net effect**. Failing to list both advantages and disadvantages of a course of action and arriving at the net effect. This is in contrast to #36 Both sides of the story where the dishonest person uses the notion that you must always have both sides of the story to elevate a weak argument to parity with a strong one. Each fact brought in must be pertinent and significant and weighted according to its significance.
64. **Pluralizing the singular**. Taking something that happened once or was said once and falsely saying or implying it happened more than once including things that the person in question even renounced after saying or doing them.
65. **Converting past tense to present**. This is where the dishonest debater depicts a past event that has not been repeated or that even has been renounced by the person in question as a continuing, ongoing, standing operating procedure practice. Converting present tense to past, etc.

66. **Slight misquote:** that significantly changes meaning. The fact that the intellectually-dishonest person feels the need to falsely quote the target of their attack reveals that the actual quote was not sufficiently bad.

67. **Talking faster or louder** on the theory that doing so means you are right and the slower or quieter talking opponent is wrong. Those are ways of speaking or writing that distract from your underlying message. One form of it is writing to impress rather than to express. That means showing off during your writing or speaking with regard to how fabulously literate, liberally educated and well-read you are. Showing off how much you know about the topic in question is not writing to impress rather than express. The whole idea of non-fiction writing is to transfer what you know to the reader. When an opponent's fast talking has the effect of preventing you from talking in a debate, it is a form of jamming, another intellectually-dishonest debate tactic listed above.

Con men. "Fast-talking salesman" is a common expression describing a person who is trying to manipulate you. It may be an effort to hypnotize you and take away your free will.

68. **Demanding that your opponent answer a question that he has already answered.** That is a violation of FRE Rule 403. The objection to it is "asked and answered" or "repetitive." The reason for it in the FRE is it wastes time. But it is also an intellectually dishonest tactic that aims to put the opponent on the defensive, which tries to make the topic of the question more important than it is that tries to elicit an inconsistent answer which the questioner can then claim is a lie.

69. **A Clifford Irving.** In Howard Hughes' later years, he was a billionaire recluse. There was great interest in him.

Writer Clifford Irving saw an opportunity. He persuaded a book publisher that he had obtained an exclusive lengthy interview with Hughes. Irving got a big advance and wrote the book based on the interview.

Hughes was a recluse, but not a corpse. He called a news conference—telephonic. He specifically invited journalists with whom he had been friends before he became a recluse. They recognized his voice and asked Hughes questions that only the real Hughes could answer. They confirmed it was the real Hughes on the phone.

Hughes then said he gave no interview to Irving. Irving was convicted of fraud and went to jail.

A Clifford Irving" is a lie that the liar thinks they will get away with because:

- a. The person who could refute it won't.
- b. The person who could refute it has no credibility.
- c. The person or investigation that could refute it or fail to corroborate it would take more time than remains before a decision on the matter has to be made.

70. **Speaking in a childlike voice.** I guess this is an implicit plea for some sort of leniency or lower standard of proof than logic or facts. It is a dishonest tactic nevertheless.
71. **Accusing you of being thin-skinned.** One definition is “unduly sensitive to criticism.” That is useless because of the word “unduly.” Other useless definitions use words like “easily” or “too easily” or “quick to take offense.” You could honestly compare the “thickness” of different people’s “skins.” But to say that one person is unduly sensitive or too sensitive is a subjective judgment and too vague. Basically, “A” criticizes “B”. “B” responds by refuting the criticism. “A” or someone else counter-responds claiming “B” is thin-skinned, too sensitive. 1. that is irrelevant to whether “B’s” refutation is valid or not. 2. Whether “B’s” response was excessive is unresolvable, in the eye of the beholder only, therefore it is an intellectually-dishonest dysphemism.

Taken from: <https://johnreed.com/blogs/john-t-reed-s-news-blog/60887299-intellectually-honest-and-intellectually-dishonest-debate-tactics>

Intellectually-honest and intellectually-dishonest debate tactics

By: John T. Reed johnreed@johnreed.com

Dear Mr. Reed,

I read your "Intellectually-honest and intellectually-dishonest debate tactics" on line and wanted to know if I can use an edited version of the list as I do not debate in politics or in the legal realm but in the area of theology. The editing is in view of the different format of the debates. I would like to also give credit where credit is due with a link to that page: <https://johnreed.com/blogs/john-t-reed-s-news-blog/60887299-intellectually-honest-and-intellectually-dishonest-debate-tactics> with your permission. I find many of your defined dishonest debate tactics happening in my opponents very often and while I do my best to "stay on topic" and having to deal with various argumentum ad nauseam; I find your list very appealing. I am not a "professional debater" and have not been involved in any debating clubs. Most of the debates I have been involved with fall outside of some of the dishonest debate tactics in your list as they seem to pertain to legal proceedings or to the political. I do not debate in these areas. I do agree with your views for the most part while not understanding some things. My debating area is in theology and have been looking for a list like you have. Adjusting some of the examples to fit what I have experienced in my debating. Some of which have become published on my web site. <http://biblestudies.av1611kjb.org> Some of these are from debates but I usually do not repost the actual debate. The debates are on FaceBook in many of the forums that I am a member of. Thank you for your consideration; a copy of the edited document is attached.

Sincerely,
David A. Sargent
Pensacola, FL

Permission Pending...