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This text is designed to help students construct and evaluate arguments. More purpose is to help students recognize when they have constructed or encountered a good or successful argument for a particular action or belief. This skill is reinforced in every section, beginning with the first four chapters that focus on the criteria of a good argument and continuing through each of the five major chapters on specific fallacies and the final chapter on writing the argumentative essay.

Scattered throughout the text are 13 distinct principles or guides for participants in rational discussion. These principles represent virtually everything a person needs to know to engage responsibly in the evaluation and construction of arguments and to participate fairly and effectively in a rational discussion of controversial issues.

One of the most difficult things for most of us to do is to know when to end a debate or discussion on an issue and to make a decision about what to do or believe. The key is to recognize when an argument is good enough for a reasonable person to embrace its conclusion. This book provides a simple and effective method for doing so by means of the five criteria of a good argument, which constitute the basis for my own theory of fallacy.

THEORY OF FALLACY

Most treatments of fallacies are not informed by any theory of fallacy. They simply list fallacies as things not to do. The approach of this book, however, is different. According to my own theory of fallacy, a fallacy is a violation of one or more of the five criteria of a good argument. The fallacies are categorized in the text by the criterion of a good argument that they violate. These five categories deal with (1) the structural demands of a well-formed argument, (2) the relevance of the argument's premises, (3) the acceptability of the argument's premises, (4) the sufficiency of the premises to support