

5 LOGICAL FALLACIES PRO-CHOICERS USE AND HOW TO RESPOND



**STUDENTS
FOR LIFE**
OF AMERICA®



Before we get started...

As passionate pro-life activists, we are constantly discussing and debating the issue of abortion in our efforts to better educate our peers and to change their hearts and minds on this topic. Whether you are protesting on a sidewalk or debating in a class, it is vital that you are prepared to engage in these conversations in an effective manner. While you may be prepared with an arsenal of knowledge, you should also be prepared with strategies for responding to common pro-choice approaches to this debate. Through this guide, we will highlight the 5 common fallacies, or 5 ways that pro-choice people illogically argue for abortion. Learn the strategies to respond to these fallacies, and you will be able to effectively argue the case for LIFE!



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1. THEY MAKE ASSUMPTIONS

ASSUMPTION #1: THE PREBORN IS NOT A HUMAN.

You need to determine whether they are assuming that the pre-born is not a human being or not a human person. If they are saying that the pre-born is not a human being, then they have denied and rejected the science of embryology. You may ask your peer, “If it is not human, then what is it?” Embryology proves and clearly states that a new human being is created at fertilization because it is then that a new human being is created with its own unique DNA. So, this life within the mother’s womb is not an alien tissue; it is a human being.

In the latter situation, your peer has challenged the value of this life as a human person. This denial of the pre-born as a person would in turn remove from them certain natural and legal rights granted to all human persons. In order to confront this assumption, you simply need to break down the four main differences between a preborn and a “fully grown” human. By doing so, you will be able to prove that these differences do not deny the pre-born the rights of personhood. This can be done very easily by using the **SLED Defense: Size, Level of Development, Environment, Degree of Dependency**.

Size

A preborn child is clearly smaller than a toddler, or a teenager, or an adult. Is the preborn less of a person due to his or her size? NO. Notice that the people in your life are different sizes and shapes. Some people are tall; others are short. One friend may be petite, while another is large. A person’s size does not define him or her as a human person. It is a characteristic of one’s physical state, but it does not negate one’s value as a human person.

Level of Development

The embryo displays obvious differences in level of development when compared with a toddler. Similarly, a child is not nearly as developed as an adult. Disabilities may also prevent a person from reaching the perceived “normal” level of development. Despite a person’s lack of self-awareness, lower intelligence, or physical disability, we continue to recognize that each is a human person. Therefore, an embryo should also qualify as a human person despite the level of development.

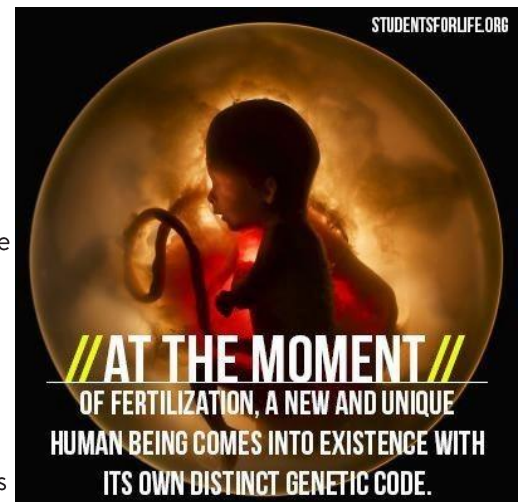
Environment

Whether or not an individual is a human person does not change based on location. A teen living in Florida will still be equally valued as a human person if his family moves him to Alaska. Likewise, a baby is a person regardless of location. This child is a person whether she is in the womb, in the birth canal, or outside of the mother’s body. Geography does not diminish the value of a person.

Dependency

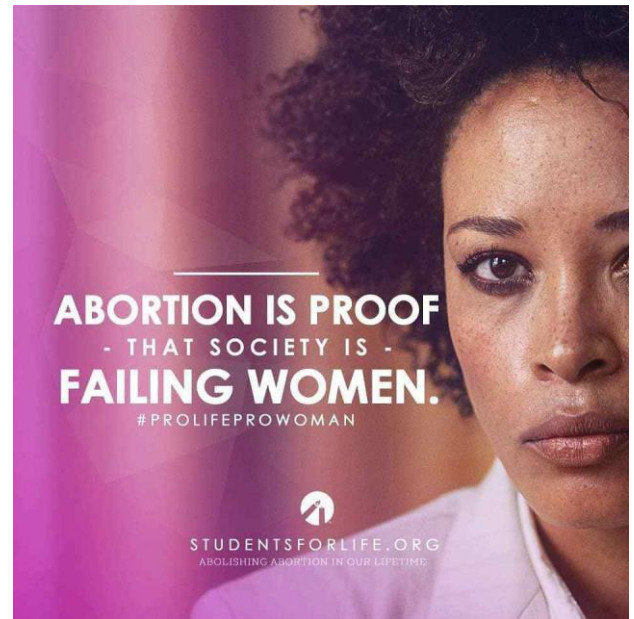
The pre-born depends on the mother for protection and nutrients for growth. Although the baby may not be able to survive outside of the womb before a certain age, this does not take away from his or her value as a human person. Consider people in your life who depend upon medication, personal assistance, or technology. Each person should be valued as a human person even if he or she needs insulin, a live-in nurse, a wheelchair, or a mother’s womb.

Every human being has been created so by the uniting of one sperm and one ovum in fertilization. We are determined to be human beings by science, and then, we are proven through logic and philosophy our value as human persons. For this reason, every human person is then granted both natural and legal rights that cannot be denied to them based on some sliding scale of value. Do not let your peer reject the reality and the value of every human—pre-born and born.



ASSUMPTION #2: LEGALITY IS EQUIVALENT TO MORALITY.

These arguments suggest that the law defines what is moral or immoral. So, if something is legal, then it must also be moral. If something is illegal, then it must be immoral. However, we know that legality does not equal morality. Slavery was allowed, and yet, we realize that this was an unjust law. The legality of slavery did not make it morally right. Likewise, prostitution is legal in Nevada but in no other states. Does this make prostitution morally “okay” only in Nevada? No. Abortion is not morally acceptable simply because it is legal. Similarly, it is not necessarily safe or good for you just because it is legal.



ASSUMPTION #3: IF ABORTION IS MADE ILLEGAL, WOMEN WILL RESORT TO HARMFUL, DANGEROUS ABORTIONS (E.G. BACK-ALLEY ABORTIONS).

This suggests that we have to keep abortion legal to protect the safety of the woman. We must allow for women to kill their unborn child or else they will put themselves at risk. In responding to this assumption, you must be gentle and respectful. You need to be especially careful to not let it appear that you don't care about the woman (her health, her emotions, her desperation, and her situation). Here is the simplest way to break down this argument:

Begin with an example. We do not make it legal to rob banks to protect bank robbers from harm. If someone commits a robbery, it is illegal regardless of the motivation to do so. Even if the robber is extremely poor and needs the cash, his situation does not justify his action. Furthermore, we do not make stealing legal because people are going to steal anyways. No. We cannot make legal something that is wrong because we suspect that people will do it anyways. Yes, there are many who still steal even though there are laws. Regardless, we don't change the law to accommodate them because we recognize that they are violating other people.

Sadly, the assumption comes down to this: women have to be free to kill 1.2 million babies per year in order to save the few who might possibly die from attempting to do it anyways. The death of any human being is devastating, and we mourn the loss of each individual. However, we cannot legalize the killing of millions of babies because we suspect that some women may unfortunately resort to other deadly means. If the unborn is human, we cannot make it legal to kill them in order to protect women from the possible harmful consequences of their decisions.

Moreover, if the preborn child is a human being with the same rights as any other human being, then we must take legal action to prevent people from intentionally seeking his or her death. In the end, we must make others see that the preborn is human, and that each human deserves the full protection of the law.

2. THEY STATE “FACTS” WITH NO SOURCES

Quite often, you will hear an abortion advocate make a **statement without justification**. An example of this is the all-too-common mantra “Women have the right to choose.” The assertion here is that a woman has the right to choose the death of the child within her. You need to ask “choose what?” The person using this argument is asserting that a person has the right to choose who should die and who should live. Now, we need to break this down for the individual, and remind them what it is that women are choosing.

First, you need your peer to define their stance. Here is how the conversation may go:

Peer: But a woman has the right to choose!

You: Where did she get this right?

Peer: From the Declaration of Independence: Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The fetus/thing/whatever will ruin her happiness!

You: But what about the right to life, liberty and happiness of the preborn?

Peer: But the preborn isn't a human being!

You: Then what is the preborn?

Two things are happening here. Your peer has asserted that there is a certain “right to choose” and that the preborn is not a human being. You must define what the rights of a human being are, and then you must always draw them back to define what it is that they are aborting. If the preborn is not a human being, then we would not be debating this. However, embryology tells us that when the ovum and the sperm unite, they create a unique individual. Fertilization creates a human being. You can then go back to the SLED defense to explain those 4 differences that do not change the reality of the preborn being a human person. If the preborn is a human being like you and me, then it must also be granted the same rights.

Remember: We do not have to argue our case until they have made theirs. There should be no pressure to talk about everything that is wrong with abortion. The focus is on defining the preborn and determining when a human is a human. Do not start arguing but make them give you their argument. Point out assertions. Be patient. Listen. Then discuss.



3. THEY CONFUSE MORAL CLAIMS WITH PREFERENCE ONES

Especially among college-aged students, we find a very popular culture of moral relativism. These students will suggest that there are preferences that can be made in certain cases. There are individual definitions of morality and truth based upon each person's situation. What's true for me is not necessarily true for you. In this way, they will argue that abortion is okay and acceptable for women based on their situation. They will argue that it may even be the best moral response to a difficult situation. However, we recognize that abortion is always morally wrong. It is always wrong to kill an innocent human being. This is a black and white scenario with no room for gray!

SCENARIO #1: "I THINK THAT ABORTION IS WRONG, BUT I DON'T WANT TO PUSH MY BELIEFS ON OTHERS."

In these cases, you must get them to answer why they think abortion is wrong for them. Their answer will eventually lead to something like "It's killing a baby" or "I wouldn't abort my own child." You need them to realize that it is wrong regardless of who is considering the abortion or what the situation is. It is wrong for you—and for everyone else.

SCENARIO #2: "YOU CAN'T FORCE YOUR MORAL BELIEFS OR OPINIONS ON ME!"

In essence, this person is forcing you to accept their beliefs. Challenge this! Ask your peer, "Why not? Why are you able to force your beliefs on me? If you can have your opinion, why can I not have my own? If everything that everyone believes is equally valid, then you should have no problem with me proclaiming my beliefs."

In discussions involving moral relativism, we need to get our peer to agree that there are objective moral values and truths. There are definitely some things that everyone can agree on as wrong. For example, everyone would agree with the following:

It is wrong to rape an individual whether this person is a 10-year-old boy or a 40-year-old woman. It is wrong in every case regardless of the circumstances. We make it illegal to rape others because we know that this is wrong. We take legal measures in order to protect people from its harms rather than protect the one intending and potentially doing that harm. We can all agree that it is always wrong to rape because it violates another human being.

No one will ever agree that rape is "acceptable" for some and not for others. It is wrong in all cases. You can never justify it as morally right in some cases but not in others. In the same way, abortion is wrong in all cases. Like rape, it violates another human being. It violates an individual who had no say in the matter.

Another approach to this discussion is to ask, "Would it be objectively wrong if I killed you right now?" Everyone who is being honest is going to say "yes." This person believes in objective value and the value of human life. You then have to connect them to the rest of the argument. If they see the value in their own life, why is there not value for the life of another human being? Why not the life of a child?

You may run into an issue when the person insists that "there is no such thing as objective truth." However, this statement in itself is an objective (absolute) truth statement! The person is saying "There is absolutely no right or wrong." In that, they are making an absolute, back-or-white type of statement. They have contradicted themselves, and inadvertently agreed that there are absolute objective truths.

People will often reject objective moral value because they see the abortion issue coming, and they don't want to bite the bullet. If the person continues to insist that morality is relative, you may need to raise other examples that almost everyone will agree upon. For this, you may use such examples as the Holocaust, the Rwandan Genocide, Sudan, etc. No one can justify a society or government doing such acts. You have to push them to the point when their moral view cannot hold because it leaves us open to unimaginable moral horrors.

When dealing with relativism, you must be able to call people out on preference claims. If you meet people with respect and listen to them, you can diffuse them in a matter of moments. Ask questions to draw their beliefs out, and work to build common ground.

4. THEY ATTACK YOU INSTEAD OF YOUR ARGUMENT

Is your peer addressing the argument, or are they **attacking you as a person**? For example, men often get told that they are not allowed to talk about abortion because **“You can’t get pregnant!”** Well, this is certainly true. A man cannot bear a child. He will never know the physical and emotional burdens and joys of pregnancy. However, he does have a voice in this fight! The fight for life is not simply a women’s issue. It is a human rights issue. Men have equal say in fighting for the lives of fellow human beings, and they can do so by turning to “genderless” discussions of science and philosophy. Science allows for the defense of the identity of the preborn as a human being. Meanwhile, philosophy is used to show the value of this human life. A person can argue from these perspectives regardless of gender.

Another “ad hominem” attack occurs when your peer challenges you with these types of questions: **“How many children have you adopted? Are you prepared to pay for this woman’s hospital bills and childcare?”** Again, they are attacking you as a person and not addressing the morality or injustice of the actual argument at hand (i.e. abortion). The question is whether or not science supports the pre-born as human beings and whether philosophy supports the pre-born as valuable. While certainly you can bring up all the powerful and productive adoption agencies in the pro-life movement, this will not necessarily help your argument. It is better to bring up a counter example.

Use an example like spousal abuse. “Can I say that spousal abuse is wrong without taking in the woman next door who is being abused by her husband?” Yes, it would be a great thing if we could take in every child and every abused spouse. Nevertheless, we are not all capable of doing so. This does not affect the validity of the statement.

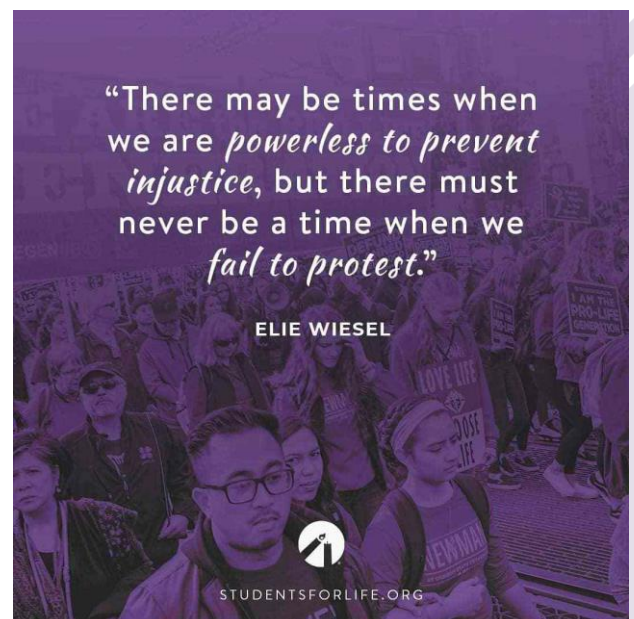
In order to defend yourself from ad hominem attacks, learn rules of good arguing so that you can point out these irrelevant issues to people. Force them to engage arguments— don’t let them attack you! Personal attacks have not undermined arguments. They are irrelevant to the questions “What is the preborn?” and “Is abortion morally wrong?” Focus on discussing these questions, and turn to science and philosophy to remain in neutral territory.

5. THEY HIDE BEHIND THE HARD CASES

What about rape? What about incest? What if the mother will die?

These are the **hard cases**, and every pro-lifer must know how to respond calmly and rationally to such scenarios. As Steve Wagner, of Justice for All, says, the rape question is less about determining whether the unborn is human and more about determining whether the pro-life advocate is human. These hard case questions are more targeted at you as an individual. What kind of person would force a woman to bear this child under such terrible circumstances? Do you really care about the woman? Will you understand and sympathize with her difficult circumstances?

Let’s focus on one hard case: rape. There are three people who are going to ask you about rape. The first is someone who is honestly and earnestly curious about your position. They are conflicted about these situations, and they are wondering how you would respond. The second is someone who has experienced sexual assault or knows someone who has been raped, and who feels the need to defend the victim of this crime. The third person is a crusader. This person does not care about rape, incest, or even the woman; they want abortion to be legal in all cases, for any



reason. They use these hard cases to try to break the pro-lifers' "no exceptions" stance. If they believe that abortion should be legal in all cases, then why are they depending on the rape cases to defend their argument? They use this case because they know that this makes you look insensitive.

When you respond to these challenges, be mindful that you are very sensitive and choose your words wisely. There may be someone within earshot who has been raped, abused, or conceived under such circumstances. You must be very respectful and compassionate in your defense. Also, you do not want to appear to have no sympathy for the woman and the emotional and/or physical pain that she is in. Being pro-life is being pro-woman, and we care just as much about her as the child in her womb.

First and foremost, you must emphasize that rape is a grave moral evil. What has happened to the woman is wrong, and the rapist must be punished to the fullest extent of the law. The next part is much trickier because you now must explain why a woman who has been so gravely violated must continue to carry a rapist's child to term. How do you convince someone who has been so hurt to bear this "burden"?

You can continue with something along these lines:

I don't like it that this is necessary. I know that this is an extremely stressing situation... But I have the emotions of the mother, and I have the life of the innocent child... I cannot take away the evil that has been done to her, and it will take a long time for her to heal from this pain... Here, I must make the best moral decision. I must choose to protect the innocent life... I am not convinced that the best that we can do in this situation is to kill the child.

In cases like rape, we must find the best, most moral solution. Two wrongs do not make a right. I am not convinced that one violent act should be the solution to another violent act. Abortion only adds to an already painful situation. Abortion will not erase what has happened and will cause more harm to a woman who has already gone through a violent situation. Furthermore, it breeds a sense of thoughtlessness in our society that we think a woman will be "okay" after she aborts her child. No, there will be much need for healing regardless of the path she takes. However, we must do our best to make the best decision—a decision that restores some dignity and love to the situation. As a society, we can do better for women! We have a responsibility to care for the woman and to provide for her needs during the pregnancy and after. She may later choose to place her child with a loving adoptive family.

If your peer uses this as a 'final blow' or an ending argument, you may put forth your response like this:

I think we both agree that rape is a terrible situation. These cases must be met with compassion and care for the woman and the child. However, the majority of abortion cases result from other factors. While we need to support pregnant mothers in cases of sexual assault, we cannot make laws to govern out society based on the rare and marginalized cases.

At this point, the other person has resorted to debating cases of rape because he/she has lost everything else. Hopefully through these discussions, your peer will come to reevaluate their stance. They may start to question why they can only justify this position in cases of rape.

You have to be ready to respond to hard cases with respect. Be gentle, but do not back down. You must maintain composure in all situations. How you argue is as important as what you are arguing for – to change hearts and minds about abortion.

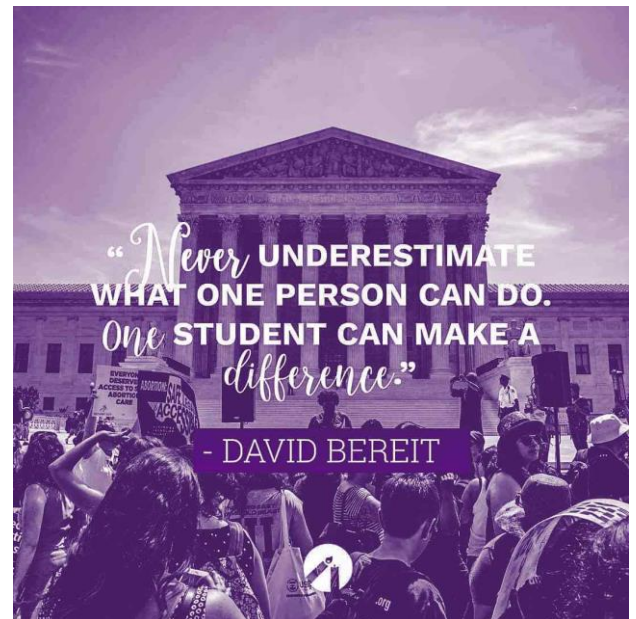


DO YOUR BEST!

At the end of the day, have confidence that you did your best to defend life! Your job is to honestly and respectfully represent the pro-life position. You will not likely change someone's mind right in front of you. However, you are planting the seed. You present the opportunity for them to have a change of heart. Good arguments from good arguers convince people over time.

With such an awareness of the terrible tragedies that occur in our country daily, we cannot abandon our defense of the truth. We must practice and practice well. It is our moral responsibility to be vocal, to be rational, and to be persistent in defending the truth. As people who passionately believe that all life has value, we need to take responsibility.

Every day, over 3,000 children die in our nation at the hands of abortionists. Are we doing enough to truly say, "I have done everything in my power and ability today to defend life"? We need to practice and prepare because their lives depend on us. With your voice, you will help lead this generation to abolish abortion in our lifetime.



**For further training, contact your SFLA Regional Coordinator at
[yourstate]@studentsforlife.org to set up a free Pro-Life
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