Absurdist – Form of satire that emphasizes and exaggerates illogical or impossible situations and events.

Allegory – The device of using character and/or story elements symbolically to represent an abstraction in addition to the literal meaning. In some allegories, for example, an author may intend the characters to personify an abstract idea like hope or freedom. The allegorical meaning usually deals with moral truth or a generalization about human existence.

Ex. Animal Farm George Orwell Lord of the Flies William Golding

Alliteration - The repetition of sounds, especially initial consonants in two or more neighboring words (as in “she sells sea shells). Although the term is not used frequently in the multiple-choice section, you can look for alliteration in any essay passage. The repetition can reinforce meaning, unify ideas, supply a musical sound, and/or echo the sense of the passage.

Allusion – A direct or indirect reference to something which is presumably commonly known, such as an event, book, myth, place, or work of art. Allusions can be historical, literary, religious, topical, or mythical. There are many more possibilities, and a work may simultaneously use multiple layers of allusion.

Ex. “Plan ahead: it wasn’t raining when Noah built the ark” - Richard Cushing

Ambiguity (am-bi-gyoo-i-tee) - The multiple meanings, either intentional or unintentional, of a word, phrase, sentence, or passage.

Analogy - A similarity or comparison between two different things or the relationship between them. An analogy can explain something unfamiliar by associating it with or pointing out its similarity to something more familiar. Analogies can also make writing more vivid, imaginative, or intellectually engaging.

Ex. He that voluntarily continues ignorance is guilty of all the crimes which ignorance produces, as to him that should extinguish the tapers of a lighthouse might justly be imputed the calamities of shipwrecks.” - Samuel Johnson

Anaphora (uh-naf-er-uh) – One of the devices of repetition, in which the same expression (word or words) is repeated at the beginning of two or more lines, clauses, or sentences.

Ex. “It was the best of times; it was the worst of times.”
“...without words, without clothes or money.” – Richard de Bury

Anastrophe - the reversal of word order for effect. Example: “Intelligent, he was not.”

Anecdote – A short narrative detailing particulars of an interesting episode or event. The term most frequently refers to an incident in the life of a person.

Antecedent (an-tuh-seed-nt) - The word, phrase, or clause referred to by a pronoun. The AP Language exam occasionally asks for the antecedent of a given pronoun in a long, complex sentence or in a group of sentences.

Antithesis (an-thih-theh-sis) – Figure of balance in which two contrasting ideas are intentionally juxtaposed, usually through parallel structure; a contrasting of opposing ideas in adjacent phrases, clauses, or sentences. Antithesis creates a definite and systematic relationship between ideas.

Ex. “That’s one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind” - Neil Armstrong

Aphorism – A terse statement which expresses a general truth or a moral principle. An aphorism can be a memorable summation of the author’s point.

Apostrophe – A figure of speech that directly addresses an absent or imaginary person or a personified abstraction, such as liberty or love. It is an address to someone or something that cannot answer. The effect is to give vent to or display intense emotion, which can no longer be held back:

Ex. William Wordsworth addresses John Milton as he writes, “Milton, thou shouldst be living at this hour: / England hath need of thee.”
“Hello Darkness, my old friend…” Simon and Garfunkel

Assonance – repetition of sounds produced by vowels within a sentence or phrase. In this regard assonance can be understood to be a kind of alliteration. What sets it apart from alliterations is that it is the repetition of only vowel sounds. Assonance is the opposite of consonance, which implies repetitive usage of consonant sounds.

Asyndeton (uh-sin-di-tuhn): consists of omitting conjunctions between words, phrases, or clauses. Asyndetic lists can be more emphatic than if a final conjunction were used.

Ex. On his return he received medals, honors, treasures, titles, fame.
Atmosphere – The emotional mood created by the entirety of a literary work, established partly by the setting and partly by the author’s choice of objects that are described. Even such elements as description of the weather can contribute to the atmosphere. Frequently, atmosphere foreshadows events.

Cacophony (dissonance) - The term in poetry refers to the use of words that combine sharp, harsh, hissing, or unmelodious sounds. It is the opposite of euphony.

Caricature – a verbal description, the purpose of which is to exaggerate or distort, for comic effect, a person’s distinctive physical features or other characteristics.

Chiasmus (kahy-az-muhs) - (From the Greek word for “criss-cross,” a designation based on the Greek letter “chi,” written X). Chiasmus is a figure of speech in which two successive phrases or clauses are parallel in syntax, but reverse the order of the analogous words.

Ex. “The land was ours before we were the land’s” – Robert Frost (N, V, Pro: Pro, V, N)
“Pleasure’s a sin, and sometimes sin’s a pleasure” – Lord Byron

Sitting together at lunch, the kids talked incessantly; but they said nothing at all sitting in the dentist’s office.

Circumlocution (sir-kuhm-loh-ey-shun) – “talking around a subject or a word”; avoiding a subject or a word by talking about it without ever naming the subject or using the word itself.

Colloquial/colloquialism (kuh-loh-kwee-uhl) - The use of slang or informalities in speech or writing. Not generally acceptable for formal writing, colloquialisms give a work a conversational, familiar tone. Colloquial expressions in writing include local or regional dialects.

Coherence - A principle demanding that the parts of any composition be arranged so that the meaning of the whole may be immediately clear and intelligible. Words, phrases, clauses within the sentence; and sentences, paragraphs, and chapters in larger pieces of writing are the unit that by their progressive and logical arrangement, make for coherence.

Conceit - A fanciful expression, usually in the form of an extended metaphor or surprising analogy between seemingly dissimilar objects. A conceit displays intellectual cleverness as a result of the unusual comparison being made.

Connotation - The nonliteral, associative meaning of a word; the implied, suggested meaning. Connotations may involve ideas, emotions, or attitudes.

Consonance – Repetitive sounds produced by consonants within a sentence or phrase. This repetition often takes place in quick succession such as in pitter, patter. It is classified as a literary term used in both poetry as well as prose. For instance, the words chuckle, fickle, and kick are consonant with one and other due to the existence of common interior consonant sounds (/ck)/.

Denotation – The strict, literal, dictionary definition of a word, devoid of any emotion attitude, or color.

Diacope – repetition of a word or phrase after an intervening word or phrase: word/phrase X, . . ., word/phrase X.

Ex. We will do it, I tell you; we will do it.
We give thanks to Thee, O God, we give thanks (Psalm 75:1)

Diction – Related to style, diction refers to the writer’s word choices, especially with regard to their correctness, clearness, or effectiveness. For the AP exam, you should be able to describe an author’s diction (for example, formal or informal, ornate or plain) and understand the ways in which diction can complement the author’s purpose. Diction, combined with syntax, figurative language, literary devices, etc., creates an author’s style.

Didactic (dahy-dak-tik) – From the Greek, didactic literally means “teaching.” Didactic works have the primary aim of teaching or instructing, especially the teaching of moral or ethical principles.

Discourse – spoken or written language, including literary works; the four traditionally classified modes of discourse are description, exposition, narration, and argumentation.

Ellipsis – The omission of one or more words which must be inferred by the reader. Sometimes, an ellipsis is indicated using . . . but sometimes the writer simply omits a word, as in the example: I know you want to help with the homework; Nancy can too. (help with the homework is omitted from the second clause) or The American soldiers killed eight civilians, and the French eight.

Enumeratio – Figure of amplification in which a subject is divided into constituent parts or details, and may include a listing of causes, effects, problems, solutions, conditions, and consequences; the listing or detailing of the parts of something.

Ex. I love her eyes, her hair, her nose, her cheeks, her lips.
“Who’s gonna turn down a Junior Mint? It’s chocolate; it’s peppermint; it’s delicious. . . It’s very refreshing!” – Kramer (Seinfeld).

Epithet - a short, poetic nickname—often in the form of an adjective or adjectival phrase—attached to the normal name. Frequently, this technique allows a poet to extend a line by a few syllables in a poetic manner that characterizes an individual or a setting within an epic poem.
Ex. The Homeric epithet in classical literature often includes compounds of two words such as "fleet-footed Achilles," "Cow-eyed Hera," "Grey-eyed Athena," or "the wine-dark sea." In other cases, it appears as a phrase such as "Odysseus, the man-of-many-wiles."

**Euphemism (yoo-fuh-miz-uh)** - From the Greek for "good speech," euphemisms are a more agreeable or less offensive substitute for a generally unpleasant word or concept. The euphemism may be used to adhere to standards of social or political correctness or to add humor or ironic understatement.

Ex. Saying "earthly remains" rather than "corpses" is an example of euphemism.

**Euphony** – A succession of harmonious sounds used in poetry or prose. It is the opposite of cacophony.

**Exposition** - In essays, one of the four chief types of composition, the others being argumentation, description, and narration. The purpose of exposition is to explain something. In drama, the exposition is the introductory material, which creates the tone, gives the setting, and introduces the characters and conflict.

**Extended metaphor** – A metaphor developed at great length, occurring frequently in or throughout the work.

**Figurative language** – Writing or speech that is not intended to carry literal meaning and is usually meant to be imaginative and vivid.

**Figure of speech** – A device used to produce figurative language. Many compare dissimilar things. Figures of speech include apostrophe, hyperbole, irony, metaphor, metonymy, oxymoron, paradox, personification, simile, synecdoche, and understatement.

**Homily (hom-uh-lee)** - This term literally means “sermon,” but more informally, it can include any serious talk, speech, or lecture involving moral or spiritual advice.

**Hyperbole (high-pur-buh-lee)** – A figure of speech using deliberate exaggeration or overstatement. Hyperboles often have a comic effect; however, a serious effect is also possible. Often, hyperbole produces irony.

Ex. "So first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself" - Franklin D. Roosevelt

This stuff is used motor oil compared to the coffee you make, my love.

**Hypophora** – Figure of reasoning in which one or more questions is/are asked and then answered, often at length, by one and the same speaker; raising and responding to one’s own question(s). A common usage is to ask the question at the beginning of a paragraph and then use the paragraph to answer it. You can use hypophora to raise questions which you think the reader obviously has on his/her mind and would like to see formulated and answered. (Ex. on next page…)

Ex. "When the enemy struck on that June day of 1950, what did America do? It did what it always has done in all its times of peril. It appealed to the heroism of its youth.” - Dwight D. Eisenhower

**Imagery** - The sensory details or figurative language used to describe, arouse emotion, or represent abstractions. On a physical level, imagery uses terms related to the five senses; we refer to visual, auditory, tactile, gustatory, or olfactory imagery. On a broader and deeper level, however, one image can represent more than one thing. For example, a rose may present visual imagery while also representing the color in a woman’s cheeks and/or symbolizing some degree of perfection. An author may use complex imagery while simultaneously employing other figures of speech, especially metaphor and simile.

**Inference/infer** – To draw a reasonable conclusion from the information presented. When a multiple-choice question asks for an inference to be drawn from a passage, the most direct, most reasonable inference is the safest answer choice. If an inference is implausible, it’s unlikely to be the correct answer. Note that if the answer choice is directly stated, it is not inferred and is wrong. You must be careful to note the connotation –negative or positive – of the choices.

**Invective** – an emotionally violent, verbal denunciation or attack using strong, abusive language.

**Irony/ironic** - The contrast between what is stated explicitly and what is really meant. The difference between what appears to be and what actually is true. In general, there are three major types of irony used in language; (1) In a verbal irony, the words literally state the opposite of the writer’s (or speaker’s) true meaning. (2) In situational irony, events turn out the opposite of what was expected, what the characters and the readers think ought to happen. (3) In dramatic irony, facts or events are unknown to a character in a play or piece of fiction, but know to the reader, audience, or other characters in the work. Irony is used for many reasons, but frequently, it’s used to create poignancy or humor.

**Jargon** – The specialized language of a professional, occupational, or other group, often meaningless to outsiders.

**Juxtaposition (juhk-stuh-puh-zish-uh)** - When two words, phrases, images, ideas are placed close together or side by side for comparison or contrast.

**Litotes (lahy-toh-teez)** – From the Greek word “simple” or “plain.” Litotes is a figure of thought in which a point is affirmed by negating its opposite. It is a special form of understatement, where the surface denial serves, through ironic contrast, to reinforce the underlying assertion.

Ex. He’s no fool (which implies he is wise).
Malapropism – “putting forth the wrong word”; the unintentional use of a word that resembles the intended word but has a different meaning. “He was a man of great statute” is just one of many examples of malapropisms.

Metaphor – A figure of speech using implied comparison of seemingly unlike things or the substitution of one for the other, suggesting some similarity. Metaphorical language makes writing more vivid, imaginative, thought provoking, and meaningful.

Metonymy (mi-ton-uh-mee) – A term from the Greek meaning “changed label” or “substitute name.” Metonymy is a figure of speech in which the name of one object is substituted for that of another closely associated with it. A news release that claims “the White House declared” rather than “the President declared” is using metonymy. The substituted term generally carries a more potent emotional response.

Mood – The prevailing atmosphere or emotional aura of a work. Setting, tone, and events can affect the mood. In this usage, mood is similar to tone and atmosphere.

Narrative – The telling of a story or an account of an event or series of events.

Onomatopoeia (on-uh-mat-uh pee-uh) – A figure of speech in which natural sounds are imitated in the sounds of words. Simple examples include such words as buzz, hiss, hum, crack, whinny, and murmur. If you see examples of onomatopoeia in an essay passage, note the effect.

Oxymoron – From the Greek for “pointedly foolish,” an oxymoron is a figure of speech wherein the author groups apparently contradictory terms to suggest a paradox. Simple examples include “jumbo shrimp” and “cruel kindness.” This term does not usually appear in the multiple-choice questions, but there is a chance that you might find it in an essay. Take note of the effect which the author achieves with this term.

Oversimplification - When a writer obscures or denies the complexity of something (a special form of understatement)

Parody – A statement that appears to be self-contradictory or opposed to common sense but upon closer inspection contains some degree of truth or validity.

Parallelism – Also referred to as parallel construction or parallel structure, this term comes from Greek roots meaning “beside one another.” It refers to the grammatical or rhetorical framing of words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs to give structural similarity. This can involve, but is not limited to, repetition of a grammatical element such as a preposition or verbal phrase. A famous example of parallelism begins Charles Dickens’s novel A Tale of Two Cities: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity . . .”

Parody – A work that closely imitates the style or content of another with the specific aim of comic effect and/or ridicule. As comedy, parody distorts or exaggerated distinctive features of the original. As ridicule, it mimics the work by repeating and borrowing words, phrases, or characteristics in order to illuminate weaknesses in the original.

Pedantic (puh-dan-tik) - An adjective that describes words, phrases, or general tone that is overly scholarly, academic, or bookish.

Personification – A figure of speech in which the author presents or describes concepts, animals, or inanimate objects by endowing them with human attributes or emotions. Personification is used to make these abstractions, animal, or objects appear more vivid to the reader.

Polysyndeton (paules-sin-dih-tawn) – Figure of addition and emphasis which intentionally employs a series of conjunctions (for, and, or, but, or, yet, so) not normally found in successive words, phrases or clauses; the deliberate and excessive use of conjunctions in successive words or clauses. The effect is a feeling of multiplicity, energetic enumeration, and building up – a persistence or intensity.

Ex. They read and studied and wrote and drilled. I laughed and talked and flunked.

“IT’s [football is] a way of life, really, to those particular people who are a part of it. It’s more than a game, and regardless of what level it’s played upon, it still demands those attributes of courage and stamina and coordinated efficiency and goes even beyond that for [it] is a means – it provides a mental and physical relaxation to everybody that watches it, like yourself.” - Vince Lombardi

Repetition - The duplication, either exact or approximate, of any element of language, such as a sound, word, phrase, clause, sentence, or grammatical pattern.

Rhetoric – From the Greek for “orator,” this term describes the principles governing the art of writing effectively, eloquently, and persuasively.

Rhetorical modes - This flexible term describes the variety, the conventions, and purposes of the major kinds of writing. (1) The purpose of exposition (or expository writing) is to explain and analyze information by presenting an idea, relevant evidence, and appropriate discussion. The AP language exam essay questions are frequently expository topics. (2) The purpose of argumentation is to prove the validity of an idea, or point of view, by presenting sound reasoning, discussion, and argument that thoroughly convince the reader. Persuasive writing is a type of argumentation having an additional aim of urging some form of action. (3) The purpose of description is to re-create, invent, or visually present a person, place, event or action so that the reader can picture that being described. Sometimes an
author engages all five senses in description. (4) The purpose of narration is to tell a story or narrate an event or series of events. This writing mode frequently uses the tools of descriptive writing. These four modes are sometimes referred to as mode of discourse.

Rhetorical Question – differs from hypophora in that it is not answered by the writer because its answer is obvious or obviously desired, and usually just a yes or no answer would suffice. It is used for effect, emphasis, or provocation, or for drawing a conclusionary statement from the fact at hand. Ex. We shrink from change; yet is there anything that can come into being without it? What does Nature hold dearer, or more proper to herself? --Marcus Aurelius

Sarcasm – From the Greek meaning “to tear flesh,” sarcasm involves bitter, caustic language that is meant to hurt or ridicule someone or something. It may use irony is a device, but not all ironic statements are sarcastic, that is, intended to ridicule. When well done, sarcasm can be witty and insightful; when done poorly, it’s simply cruel.

Satire – A work that targets human vices and follies or social institutions and conventions for reform or ridicule. Regardless of whether or not the work aims to reform human behavior, satire is best seen as a style of writing rather than a purpose for writing. It can be recognized by the many devices used effectively the satirist: irony, wit, parody, caricature, hyperbole, understatement, and sarcasm. The effects of satire are varied, depending on the writer’s goal, but good satire, often humorous, is thought provoking and insightful about the human condition.

Semantics – The branch of linguistics that studies the meaning of words, their historical and psychological development, their connotations, and their relation to one another.

Syllogism (sil-uh-jiz-uhm) – From the Greek for “reckoning together,” a syllogism (or syllogistic-reasoning or syllogistic logic) is a deductive system of formal logic that presents two premises (the first one called “major” and the second, “minor”) that inevitably lead to a sound conclusion. A frequently cited example proceeds as follows;

Major premise: All men are mortal
Minor premise: Socrates is a man.
Conclusion: Therefore, Socrates is mortal.

A Syllogism’s conclusion is valid only if each of the two premises is valid. Syllogisms may also present the specific idea first (“Socrates”) and the general second (“All men”).

Symbol/symbolism – Generally, anything that represents itself and stands for something else. Usually a symbol is something concrete – such as object, action, character, or scene – that represents something more abstract. However, symbols, and symbolism can be much more complex.

Synecdoche (si-nehk-uh-keh) – is a type of metaphor in which the part stands for the whole, the whole for a part, the genus for the species, the species for the genus, the material for the thing made, or in short, any portion, section, or main quality for the whole or the thing itself (or vice versa).

Ex. Farmer Joes has two hundred head of cattle [whole cattle], and three hired hands [whole people].

If we had some wheels [car], I’d put on my best threads [clothes] and ask for Jane’s hand [hopefully her whole person] in marriage.

Syntax – The way an author chooses to join words into phrases, clauses, and sentences. Syntax is similar to diction, but you can differentiate them by thinking of syntax as the groups of words, while diction refers to the individual words. In the multiple-choice section, expect to be asked some questions about how an author manipulates syntax. In the essay section, you will need to analyze how syntax produces effects.

Theme - The central idea or message of a work, the insight it offers into life. Usually theme is unstated in fictional works, but in nonfiction, the theme may be directly stated, especially in expository or argumentative writing.

Tone – Similar to mood, tone describes the author’s attitude toward his material, the audience, or both. Tone is easier to determine in spoken language than in written language. Considering how a work would sound if it were read aloud can help in identifying an author’s tone. Consult your TONE WORDS handout for examples.

Understatement – The ironic minimizing of fact, understatement presents something as less significant than it is. The effect can frequently be humorous and emphatic. Understatement is the opposite of hyperbole.

Ex. The 1906 San Francisco earthquake interrupted business somewhat in the downtown area.

Last week I saw a woman flayed, and you will hardly believe how much it altered her person for the worse.

– Jonathan Swift

Undertone - An attitude that may lie under the ostensible tone of the piece. Under a cheery surface, for example, a work may have threatening undertones. William Blake’s “The Chimney Sweeper” from the Songs of Innocence has a grim undertone.

Vernacular (dialect) - a variety of speech characterized by its own particular grammar or pronunciation often associated with a particular geographic region.

Wit – In modern usage, intellectually amazing language that surprises and delights. A witty statement is humorous, while suggesting the speaker’s verbal power in creating ingenious and perceptive remarks. Wit usually uses terse language that makes a pointed statement.
TERMS ASSOCIATED WITH LOGIC AND LOGICAL REASONING

Argument
An argument is a piece of reasoning with one or more premises and a conclusion. Essentially, every essay is an argument that begins with the conclusion (the thesis) and then sets up the premises. An argument (or the thesis to an argument) is also sometimes called a claim, a position, or a stance.

Premise: All Spam is pink
Premise: I am eating Spam
Conclusion: I am eating something that is pink

Premises: Statements offered as reasons to support a conclusion are premises.

Conclusion: A conclusion is the end result of the argument — the main point being made. In an argument one expects that the conclusion will be supported with reasons or premises. Moreover, these premises will be true and will, in fact, lead to the conclusion.

Aristotle's appeals
The goal of argumentative writing is to persuade an audience that one’s ideas are valid, or more valid than someone else’s. The Greek philosopher Aristotle divided all means of persuasion (appeals) into three categories - ethos, pathos, and logos.

Ethos (credibility) means being convinced by the credibility of the author. We tend to believe people whom we respect. In an appeal to ethos, a writer tries to convince the audience the he or she someone worth listening to, in other words an authority on the subject, as well as someone who is likable and worthy of respect. (Also see the fallacy of appeal to authority.) An argument that relies too heavily on ethos, without any corroborating logos, can become a fallacy.

Pathos (emotional) means persuading by appealing to the reader’s emotions. (Also see the fallacy of appeal to emotion.) An argument that relies too much on emotion, without any corroborating logos, can become a fallacy.

Logos (logical) means persuading by the use of reasoning, using true premises and valid arguments. This is generally considered the strongest form of persuasion.

call to action: a technique that urges the reader to act (strong in a persuasive conclusion)

claim: thesis or main point, especially in persuasive writing

Concession
Accepting at least part or all of an opposing viewpoint. Often used to make one’s own argument stronger by demonstrating that one is willing to accept what is obviously true and reasonable, even if it is presented by the opposition. Sometimes also called multiple perspectives because the author is accepting more than one position as true. Sometimes a concession is immediately followed by a rebuttal of the concession.

Conditional Statement
A conditional statement is an if-then statement and consists of two parts, an antecedent and a consequent. “If you studied hard, then you will pass the test.” Conditional statements are often used as premises in an argument:

Premise: If I eat Spam, then I will throw up. (conditional)
Premise: I have eaten Spam.
Conclusion: Ergo, I will throw up.
Contradiction
A contradiction occurs when one asserts two mutually exclusive propositions, such as, “Abortion is wrong and abortion is not wrong.” Since a claim and its contradictory cannot both be true, one of them must be false.

Counterexample
A counterexample is an example that runs counter to (opposites) a generalization, thus falsifying it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Premise:</th>
<th>Jane argued that all whales are endangered.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Premise:</td>
<td>Belugas are a type of whale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premise:</td>
<td>Belugas are not endangered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion:</td>
<td>Therefore, Jane’s argument is unsound.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Deductive argument
An argument in which it is thought that the premises provide a guarantee of the truth of the conclusion. In a deductive argument, the premises are intended to provide support for the conclusion that is so strong that, if the premises are true, it would be impossible for the conclusion to be false. (also see inductive argument)

Fallacy
A fallacy is an attractive but unreliable piece of reasoning. Writers do not want to make obvious fallacies in their reasoning, but they are often used unintentionally, or when the writer thinks they can get away with faulty logic. Common examples of fallacies include the following:

Ad hominem: Latin for “against the man”. Personally attacking your opponents instead of their arguments. It is an argument that appeals to emotion rather than reason, feeling rather than intellect.

Appeal to authority: The claim that because somebody famous supports an idea, the idea must be right. This fallacy is often used in advertising.

Appeal to the bandwagon: The claim, as evidence for an idea, that many people believe it, or used to believe it, or do it. In the 1800’s there was a widespread belief that bloodletting cured sickness. All of these people were not just wrong, but horribly wrong, because in fact it made people sicker. Clearly, the popularity of an idea is no guarantee that it’s right.

Appeal to emotion: An attempt to replace a logical argument with an appeal to the audience’s emotions. Common emotional appeals are an appeal to sympathy, an appeal to revenge, an appeal to patriotism – basically any emotion can be used as an appeal.

Bad analogy: Claiming that two situations are highly similar, when they aren’t. “We have pure food and drug laws regulating what we put in our bodies; why can’t we have laws to keep musicians from giving us filth for the mind?”

Cliche thinking: Using as evidence a well-known saying, as if it is proven, or as if it has no exceptions. “I say ‘America love it or leave it.’ Anyone who disagrees with anything our country does must hate America. So maybe they should just move somewhere else.”

Hasty generalization: A generalization based on too little or unrepresentative data. “My uncle didn’t go to college, and he makes a lot of money. So, people who don’t go to college do just as well as those who do.”

Non Sequitur: A conclusion that does not follow from its premises; an invalid argument. “Hinduism is one of the world’s largest religious groups. It is also one of the world’s oldest religions. Hinduism helps millions of people lead happier, more productive lives. Therefore the principles of Hinduism must be true.”

Slippery slope: The assumption that once started, a situation will continue to its most extreme possible outcome. “If you drink a glass of wine, then you’ll soon be drinking all the time, and then you’ll become a homeless alcoholic.”
Inductive argument
An argument in which it is thought that the premises provide reasons supporting the probable truth of the conclusion. In an inductive argument, the premises are intended only to be so strong that, if they are true, then it is unlikely that the conclusion is false. (also see deductive argument)

Preponderance of evidence
Sufficient facts, statistics, anecdotes, and examples that a speaker or writer offers in support of a claim, generalization, or conclusion.

Sound argument
A deductive argument is said to be sound if it meets two conditions: First, that the line of reasoning from the premises to the conclusion is valid. Second, that the premises are true.

Stance
A writer’s or speaker’s apparent attitude towards the audience and/or subject.

Syllogism
A three-part deductive argument in which a conclusion is based on a major premise and a minor premise (“All men are mortal; Socrates is a man; therefore, Socrates is mortal”).

Thesis
The sentence or groups of sentences that directly expresses the author’s opinion, purpose, meaning, or proposition. This is sometimes called a claim. It should be short and clear. (also see argument)

Unstated premises
Not every argument is fully expressed. Sometimes premises or even conclusions are left unexpressed. If one argues that Rover is smart because all dogs are smart, he is leaving unstated that Rover is a dog. Here the unstated premise is no problem; indeed it would probably be obvious in context. But sometimes unstated premises are problematic, particularly if two parties in a discussion are making differing assumptions.

Valid argument
An argument is valid if the conclusion logically follows from the premises.

The following argument is valid, because it is impossible for the premises to be true and the conclusion to nevertheless be false. We do not know if the argument is sound, because we do not know if the premises are true or not.

Premise: Either Elizabeth owns a Honda or she owns a Saturn.
Premise: Elizabeth does not own a Honda.
Premise: Therefore, Elizabeth owns a Saturn.

The following argument is also valid, because the conclusion does follow logically from the premises. However, the argument is not sound, because one of its premises is clearly untrue.

Premise: All flightless birds are man-eaters.
Premise: The penguin is a flightless bird.
Conclusion: Therefore, the penguin is a man-eater.

The following argument is not valid, even though its premises are true:

Premise: All baseballs are round.
Premise: All basketballs are round.
Premise: No football is round.
Premise: The earth is round.
Conclusion: The earth is either a baseball or a basketball, but not a football.