

## Unsupported Generalization Errors in Reasoning

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**Definition:** An unsupported generalization error applies specific facts to a broad generalization without justification.

**Example:** Getting advice on major decisions is essential. Mary always asked her grandfather for advice. He has a lifetime of experiences to draw upon to counsel his granddaughter, and older men have valuable wisdom to impart if one but asks.

**Explanation:** It has not be established that more punishment leads to better student behavior.

### Practice

Hair color is genetically determined. Bobby and Amanda have blonde hair. They both excel at sports. All blonde children excel at sports.

**Explain the Unsupported Generalization Error:** \_\_\_\_\_

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### Application

Write a topic sentence on a subject of your choice with supporting evidence and analysis which includes an unsupported generalization error in reasoning. Explain the unsupported generalization error.

**Topic Sentence:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Evidence:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Analysis with Unsupported Generalization Error:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Explain the Unsupported Generalization Error:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## Errors in Reasoning Practice Answers

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**Synonym Error:** The writer substitutes *dictatorship* for *undemocratic*. However, not all undemocratic forms of government are the same as dictatorships.

**Non Sequitur Error:** The conclusion that “the sky must be made of ocean water” does not follow logically from the facts presented.

**Red Herring Error:** The statement “the world has always had its share of poor people” attempts to distract the reader from the issue of poverty as the most important world problem.

**Unsupported Generalization Error:** The fact that specific children who have blonde hair are good athletes does not justify the broad generalization that “All blonde children excel at sports.”

**Poisoning the Well Error:** The president’s argument that reducing taxes will encourage taxpayers to spend more money is weakened by the comment that all leading economists have criticized the plan.

**Cause and Effect Errors:** Sneezing after a commercial is a matter of coincidence. Commercials do not cause sneezing. There is no logical cause-effect connection.

**Begging the Question Errors:** The statement assumes an advisory document requires homeowners to agree to the advice.

**Either-Or Errors:** The statement ignores other options that true Americans might choose.

**Comparison Errors:** The price of tea and gas are unrelated issues and cannot be compared.

**Questionable Authority Errors:** In the first example, the expert is non-specific. In the second example, a mathematician is not an expert in matters of love.

**Contradiction Errors:** Skateboard injuries contradict the claim that the sport is completely safe.

**Inconsistency Errors:** The arguments that children should be required to wear helmets while riding bicycles, but not while in-line skating, are not in agreement.

**Omission Errors:** The fact that the Folsom High School Band is the only band in the city has been omitted.

**Oversimplification Errors:** This oversimplification ignores the complicated components such as baseball strategy, substitutions, and statistical probability.

**Sampling Errors:** Only about 20 dentists were surveyed as part of the sample group—hardly enough people upon whom to base a conclusion that “three out of every four dentists recommend flossing three times per day.”