

## Slippery Slope: Lesson Plan

Topic	
<p>Also called the absurd extrapolation, thin edge of the wedge, camel’s nose, and domino fallacy, the slippery slope is a logical fallacy in which a relatively small claim is asserted to inevitably lead to a significant event that must be avoided. Despite the initial assertion, little to no evidence is actually given to support or prove the causality of this relationship. The slippery slope can have many events between the first claim and its final impactful disaster, but only these two events are needed for the assertion to be a slippery slope. In essence, the argument becomes an appeal to the probability fallacy: the audience is asked to act as if a highly unlikely event will definitely occur.</p>	
Possible subjects/classes	Time needed
English, Psychology, Sociology, Philosophy, Politics/Government	30-45 minutes
Video link:	
<a href="https://academy4sc.org/topic/slippy-slope-jumping-from-a-to-z/">https://academy4sc.org/topic/slippy-slope-jumping-from-a-to-z/</a>	
Objective: <i>What will students know/be able to do at the end of class?</i>	
<p>Students will be able to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Define slippery slope.</li> <li>● Explain why the slippery slope argument is a logical fallacy and why it is often used.</li> <li>● Effectively avoid making slippery slope claims and also defend their own arguments from such claims.</li> </ul>	
Key Concepts & Vocabulary	
Fallacy	
Materials Needed	
Worksheet	

### Before you watch

**Quick debate:** Ask students to name a “silly” debate topic that they feel strongly about (which came first, the chicken or the egg, or should you put milk in before cereal?). Using one of the students’ topics, host a small debate. Be sure to pick a topic that students seem interested in but will not lead to a heated debate.

Act as a mediator when necessary. Allow students to debate for a few minutes on why their side is superior. Students may use slippery slope arguments independently, especially if you create a silly environment for the debate. If they don’t, feel free to provide examples - “milk-first side, your opponents have often stated in the past that pouring milk first is a sign of degeneracy. If everyone were to put milk first, then cereal into their breakfast bowls, the crime rate would skyrocket. How would you deal with this new wave of criminality?”

Once the debate has ended, point out any uses of the slippery slope fallacy and why they were used. Ask students whether they think such a tactic is used in more serious debates and whether they would be effective.

### While you watch

Answer questions 1-4 on the Worksheet.

### After you watch/discussion questions

1. When and where do you see slippery slope arguments being employed?
2. How do slippery slope arguments reflect on the person using them?
3. Why might someone use a slippery slope argument?

### Activity Ideas

- Complete the rest of the Worksheet.
- Ask students to see if they could have the debate from the beginning of class without using a slippery slope argument.
- Stage another debate, but choose a topic that is a social issue or current event that students care about.

### Sources/places to learn more



1. Burgess, J. A. "The great slippery-slope argument." *Journal of Medical Ethics*, vol 19, issue 3, 1993. Doi: 10.1136/jme.19.3.169.
2. Govier, Trudy. "What's Wrong with Slippery Slope Arguments?" *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, vol 12, issue 2, 1982, pp 303-316. Doi: 10.1080/00455091.1982.10715799.
3. Welsh, David T., Lisa D. Ordóñez, Deirdre G. Synder, and Michael S. Christian. "The slippery slope: How small ethical transgressions pave the way for larger future transgressions." *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol 100, issue 1, Jan 2015, pp 114-127.
4. Van der Burg, Wibren. "The Slippery Slope Argument." *Ethics*, vol 102, number 1, Oct 1991, pp 42-65. Doi: 10.1086/293369.