

# Appeal to Force

*argumentum ad baculum*

*(also known as: argument to the cudgel, appeal to the stick)*

**Description:** When force, coercion, or even a threat of force is used in place of a reason in an attempt to justify a conclusion.

## **Logical Form:**

*If you don't accept X as true, I will hurt you.*

## **Example #1:**

*Melvin: Boss, why do I have to work weekends when nobody else in the company does?*

*Boss: Am I sensing insubordination? I can find another employee very quickly, thanks to Craigslist, you know.*

**Explanation:** Melvin has asked a legitimate question to which he did not get a legitimate answer, rather his question was deflected by a threat of force (as being forced out of his job).

## **Example #2:**

*Jordan: Dad, why do I have to spend my summer at Jesus camp?*

*Dad: Because if you don't, you will spend your entire summer in your room with nothing but your Bible!*

**Explanation:** Instead of a reason, dad gave Jordan a description of a punishment that would happen.

**Exception:** If the force, coercion, or threat of force is not being used as a reason but as a fact or consequence, then it would not be fallacious, especially when a legitimate reason is given with the "threat", direct or implied.

*Melvin: Boss, why do I have to wear this goofy-looking hardhat?*

*Boss: It is state law; therefore, company policy. No hat, no job.*

**Tip:** Unless you are an indentured servant (slave) or still living with your parents (slave), do not allow others to force you into accepting something as true.

## **References:**

Jason, G. (1987). The nature of the argumentum ad baculum. *Philosophia*, 17(4), 491–499.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02381067>

