

**Criticizing the Person Who Makes an Argument:
When is It Justified? When is it Fallacy Ad Hominem?**

Example 1:

John Doe: "I think that it is immoral to use nuclear weapons. To use them certainly would kill a huge number of innocent civilians, and any weapons system that kills innocent parties is automatically immoral."

Response: "I can't take this argument seriously. John Doe is a communist and a sexual pervert! And he is a drug user! I would not trust anything he says."

Example 2:

John Doe: "You can take it from me: Nuclear weapons should be banned. I know about these things, since I have a PhD in physics and have extensively studied nuclear weapons. I also once was an air force officer and worked with nuclear weapons."

Response: "John Doe is a communist, and his ideology is so different from mine that I doubt there is much political common ground between us. Accordingly, I cannot accept the authority of his argument in this case."

Example 3:

John Doe: "Nuclear weapons are very unreliable weapons systems. Study after study have conclusively shown that nuclear weapons often fail to detonate when they are supposed to, they miss their targets, or their explosive impacts are unpredictable. I know about these things, since I have a PhD in physics and have extensively studied nuclear weapons. I also once was an air force officer and worked with nuclear weapons."

Response: "It is true that John Doe is an expert in nuclear weapons, based on his credentials. He has a good track record as a commentator on these issues, and has never been known to distort or falsify information to the best of my knowledge. However, he is also a communist, and accordingly I cannot accept his arguments."