

Assumptions

An assumption is something that is believed to be true, without stating that it is true. Assumptions are underlying beliefs behind certain statements and claims. *Almost everything we say* is prefaced by an assumption. Consider:

“You should take an umbrella; it’s about to rain.”

There are various assumptions underlying this sentence. First, there is the assumption that an umbrella is a useful guard against rain; secondly, there is the assumption that you somehow need to be protected from the rain, that getting wet in the rain is not a desirable thing.

Notice how none of these assumptions (that umbrellas protect from the rain and that it is not desirable to get wet in the rain) are NOT stated. Assumptions are implicit; they form the basis of belief.

“Watch out! There is a polar bear behind you!”

This simple statement contains numerous assumptions; for example:

1. Polar bears are dangerous (otherwise you wouldn’t need to warn somebody);
2. The polar bear is alive, or that it is not an inanimate teddy bear;
3. The polar bear is posing a threat to you and there is nothing protecting you from the polar bear, etc.

So rule number one about assumptions: they are not stated. If you are just paraphrasing or restating something said, it is not an assumption. Consider:

“The fire marshall declared that the building was not fit for public use.”

What is NOT an assumption in this sentence: *The fire marshall thinks the building is not suited to use by the public* because this is simply restating what is already contained in the sentence.

So rule number two about assumptions: paraphrases and restatements are not assumptions.

Assumptions are very important in critical thinking, and while they are not always the most easy thing to determine they form the foundation of any critical thinking or critical reasoning.

EXERCISE

Now try the assumptions quiz by clicking [here](#)>