

## INFORMAL LOGIC FALLACIES

## EXERCISE 3

Below are 21 arguments that (arguably) illustrate each of the 21 fallacies in the Informal Logic Fallacy Toolkit Reference Sheet. Match each argument to a fallacy by placing a number from 1 to 21 (in accordance with the reference sheet) in the space provided. One of the “arguments” is not actually an argument. For this one, write *NA* for *no argument*.

1. As soon as we, as a society, endorse euthanasia (mercy killing), we can anticipate what will inevitably unfold. Sure, we will start out with rigid controls over the use of euthanasia, such as requiring the consent of a patient through a living will. But, pretty soon, doctors and families will reason that absent a living will it is in the patient’s interest to die anyhow. And such reasoning will not be unbiased: doctors will want to free up hospitable beds and families will want to dispose of a relative who is inconveniencing everyone by falling ill. You can bet that there will also be some family members wondering about a little inheritance money arriving just a little sooner than anticipated, to pay off that pesky mortgage. People are greedy and self-centered, rationalizing all kinds of justifications for speeding up an old relative’s death. Before you know it, it’ll be time to send Granny to the hospitable to “cure” that insufferable cold of hers! \_\_\_\_\_
2. Imagine, if you will, a homunculus (little man) held prisoner at the helm of a large ship. This homunculus has acquired knowledge of navigational systems and uses this knowledge to steer the ship. This is precisely what you are: a conscious self trapped in a larger body utilizing knowledge to orchestrate the movements of the parts. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Diogenes: “Do you know your father?” Lucan: “Why, yes, I do indeed!” Diogenes: “See that man over there with the hood over his head?” Lucan: “Yes, I see him.” Diogenes: “Do you know that man?” Lucan: “No, I do not.” Diogenes: “But he is your father! Therefore, you both know and do not know your own father!” \_\_\_\_\_
4. Ninety-two point four percent of juvenile delinquents have eaten tomatoes. Ninety-seven percent of all who have been charged with murder have confessed to eating a tomato at least once in their lifetime. A stunning 98 percent of armed robbers have eaten tomatoes. The stats say it all: eating tomatoes leads to criminal activity. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Joe: “He talks with angels.” Jane: “How do you know that?” Joe: “He admits it.” Jane: “But suppose he lies?” Joe: “Don’t be silly, anyone who talks with angels does not lie.” \_\_\_\_\_
6. Everybody that I have talked to in my neighbourhood is for the national gun registry, so I am convinced that a provincial referendum on whether to have a registry will result in its being supported. \_\_\_\_\_
7. It is wrong to drive faster than the speed limit. Drivers of firetrucks, in responding to an emergency, often go faster than the speed limit. When they do go faster than the speed limit, they are engaged in wrongdoing. \_\_\_\_\_
8. Each H<sub>2</sub>O molecule does not have the properties associated with being a liquid. Therefore, water, which is made up of H<sub>2</sub>O molecules, does not have the properties associated with being a liquid. \_\_\_\_\_
9. The members of the Occupy movement are advocating for a radical change to our economic and social system, complaining, among many things, that there are gross inequalities in society. But these protesters don’t really care for change: what they really want is an economic system that gives them free handouts in the form of welfare cheques. We shouldn’t take them seriously. \_\_\_\_\_



## BLM 2.4 Continued

10. The average Canadian family has 1.8 children. The Smiths family is an average Canadian family. Therefore, the Smiths have 1.8 children. \_\_\_\_\_
11. “This rubber ball and that apple are both red, round, smooth, and shiny. That apple is very good to eat. Therefore, this rubber ball will be very good to eat.” (Fischer, David Hackett (1970). *Historians’ Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought*. New York: Harper & Row, p. 253) \_\_\_\_\_
12. No one can prove that there aren’t any unicorns in the entire universe. Until this can be proven once and for all, I, for one, will continue to believe in the existence of unicorns. \_\_\_\_\_
13. Abortion, by definition, is the killing of human life while it is in the uterus. Since the killing of human life is wrong, so is abortion. \_\_\_\_\_
14. If God had meant us to fly, he would have given us wings. We should, therefore, get rid of those flying machines. \_\_\_\_\_
15. Ladies and Gentlemen of the jury, my client has given lots of money to a local charity that enables kids to go to camp. My client is currently raising an adopted child from a poor country, and makes daily visits to his mother at the local home for seniors. If you find him guilty of economic fraud and send him to jail, fewer children will be able to go to camp, a little boy will miss his doting dad, and a lonely senior will feel abandoned. For their sakes, please find him innocent. \_\_\_\_\_
16. “Mr. Martin claims that boys tend to be better at math than girls. What a ridiculous overgeneralization! My friend Alice is the best math student in her class. So, it’s clear that girls are better at math than boys.” (Bassham et al., (2002). *Critical Thinking: A Student’s Introduction*. Toronto: McGraw-Hill, p. 158.) \_\_\_\_\_
17. “A parent admonishes his or her child for having stolen candy from the corner store. The child responds: “Your argument is no good. You told me yourself just a week ago that you, too, stole candy when you were a kid.” (Hurley, p. 112) \_\_\_\_\_
18. God does exist! I asked Professor Jenkins from St. Michael’s Theological College and he says “Yes, God does exist.” Surely a professor of theology ought to know! \_\_\_\_\_
19. Either you are for the police being able to access personal information about your internet activity without a search warrant or, by disabling swift and effective police monitoring of internet activity, you are for the distribution of child pornography on the internet. Surely you are not for the distribution of child pornography on the internet, so back off on your demand for privacy and allow the police to monitor your internet activity. \_\_\_\_\_
20. I was a subject in Dr. Asche’s experiment on people’s perceptions of line lengths. We were asked to match one of three lines—A, B, or C—to a given line. I was not initially convinced that line B matched the given line; in fact, I thought it was line C. But everyone else in the room insisted that line B was the one that matched the given line. So, when asked, I chose line B as the matching line. \_\_\_\_\_
21. When playing indoor soccer, we have a rule that the ball must not go over shoulder height. That is how we have always played the game here and we have had this rule in place for years. You may have good reasons for changing the rule, but this is how we have always played it and, for this reason, we should continue with this rule. \_\_\_\_\_
22. You think Keith Richards, lead guitarist of the rock band The Rolling Stones, is a great guitarist. He was a self-centred individual who, for most of his life, was heavily into drugs. Knowing this about him, I cannot entertain the idea he was a great guitarist. \_\_\_\_\_

