

2020 Presidential-Debate

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2020 Presidential-Debate BINGO

by Bryan A. Garner

As you watch the candidates Tuesday, pay attention to their modes of argument. Try to identify as many modes and rhetorical devices as you can. Some but not all of these arguments are fallacious. Each statement you isolate can qualify in only one category.

Here are your categories:

1. **Apophysis** /uh-POF-uh-sis/: mentioning something while disclaiming to mention it. (“I won’t even mention the lie you told last week about . . .”)
2. **Aporia**: professing not to know where to begin. (“I don’t even know where to start in answering that point.”)
3. **Appeal to definition**: use of dictionary definitions. (“The dictionary defines [milkstop, autocrat, sociopath] as X. It’s clear that you fit that definition.”)
4. **Appeal to divinity**: invoking what God thinks. (“Christ himself would disapprove of what you’re suggesting.”)
5. **Appeal to self-evident truth**: the claim that everybody knows something that many doubt. (“Everybody knows that your entire staff despises you.”)
6. **Appeal to the common person**: I’m a regular guy like you. (“My fellow Americans, I understand what you want. I’m one of you.”)
7. **Argument from normality**: appeal to standards or norms. (“You have violated every standard of decent behavior.”)
8. **Argumentum a simili**: argument by analogy. (“If you can’t handle X, then just think what will happen if [Y].”)
9. **Argumentum ab auctoritate**: appealing to authority. (“So-and-so [e.g., the Supreme Court] says I’m right.”)
10. **Argumentum ab impossibili**: argument from impossibility. (“That’s simply impossible.”)
11. **Argumentum ad baculum**: depending on physical force. (“The military will intervene if I decide it’s necessary.”)
12. **Argumentum ad antiquitatem**: the wisdom of the ancients. (“Our forebears were much wiser than people today are, and they said [X].”)
13. **Argumentum ad captandum**: appealing to the audience’s emotions. (“Most of us know people who have died unnecessarily.”)
14. **Argumentum ad crumenam**: appealing to your pocketbook. (“You’ll have more money in the bank if you vote for me.”)
15. **Argumentum ad hominem**: based on disparagement of the opponent. (“Everyone knows you have no morals whatsoever.”)
16. **Argumentum ad ignorantiam**: based on the adversary’s ignorance. (“You don’t even know basic facts about [science, China, etc.]”)
17. **Argumentum ad invidiam**: appealing to hatred or prejudice. (“If you’re in control, the [hated group] will be in control.”)
18. **Argumentum ad iudicium**: appealing to pertinent proofs. (Examples include marshaling valid evidence and sticking to the point.)
19. **Argumentum ad misericordiam**: appealing to pity. (“I’ve been through more hardship than any other politician in memory.”)
20. **Argumentum ad numeram**: appeal to popularity when popularity can’t establish the point. (“Polls show that most Americans think the coronavirus is/isn’t under control.”)

- 21. Argumentum ad populum:** appealing to crowds. (“I have bigger rallies than you!”)
- 22. Argumentum ex silentio:** argument based on lack of solid evidence. (“There’s simply no evidence that . . .”)
- 23. Argumentum in terrorem:** invocation of terror. (“If I’m not elected, horrible things will happen to this country.”)
- 24. Asteism:** politely clever mockery. (“You should know. You’re the President [or You were the Vice President], after all.”)
- 25. Caconym:** use of an objectionable or inappropriate term. (“China virus,” “deplorables,” etc.)
- 26. Choplogic:** an illogical argument based on trivial points that are impossible to follow. (Find your own.)
- 27. Doublespeak:** word choice made for the purpose of deception or misrepresentation. (Find your own.)
- 28. Epiplexis:** the use of rebuke or reproach. (“Shame on you.”)
- 29. Epithet:** trying to name one’s opponent in a disparaging way. (Sleepy Joe/Crummy Trump.)
- 30. Epitrope** /ee-PI-truh-pee/: a declaration that objective outside observers would side with you. (“Let’s let the American people decide.”)
- 31. Epizeuxis:** emphatic repetition. (Look for instances of saying something three times in quick succession.)
- 32. Erotesis** /er-oh-TEE-sis/: an unbroken series of rhetorical questions. (“Why should we believe you? Why should anyone would believe you? How could any sensible person believe you?”)
- 33. Guilt by association:** your comrades are bad, and so you must be. (“Your friends and family have been found to be corrupt. We know that you are, too.”)
- 34. Hyperbole:** exaggeration of facts to distort. (Find your own.)
- 35. Ignoratio elenchi** /ig-nor-AY-shee-oh i-LENG-kee/: trying to establish a point by arguing irrelevancies. (“The wall does/does not work. Crime is going down/up in our cities!”)
- 36. Illeism:** reference to oneself in the third person. (“Let me tell you what [Biden] [Trump] thinks”—in reference to the speaker himself.)
- 37. Ipse dixit:** a totally unsupported assertion. (“It’s true because I say so.”)
- 38. Logomachy** /luh-GOM-uh-kee/: a dispute over terminology. (An argument about the appropriateness of certain words.)
- 39. Metanoia** /met-uh-NOY-uh/: correcting oneself for rhetorical effect. (“I stand here as a candidate . . . well, no, as your President Elect as of November.”)
- 40. Non sequitur** /non SEK-wi-tuhr/: a statement that doesn’t follow. (“I’m the candidate you can trust. I’m from New York/Delaware.”)
- 41. Nosism** /NOH-siz-uhm/: the use of *we* in reference to oneself.
- 42. Paralipsis** /pa-ruh-LYP-sis/: a brief reference to something to emphasize the suggestiveness of what is omitted. (“I’ll mention only two of the hundreds of lies you’ve told in the last month.”)
- 43. Porcinocephalic refusal:** pigheaded denial of a point. (“You say there’s global warming. I just don’t agree. I have nothing more to say. I just don’t accept that.”)
- 44. Psittacism** /SIT-uh-siz-uhm/: thoughtless parroting of another’s words or ideas without any personal understanding of what one is saying.
- 45. Rodomontade** /rod-uh-mon-TAHD/: blustering braggadocio; ranting self-praise.
- 46. Sloganeering:** the use of rallying cries or attention-getting phrases instead of reasoning.
- 47. Tapinosis** /tap-i-NOH-sis/: the debasement of something by calling it by some undignified name. (“The flunkies that you call/called your Kitchen Cabinet.”)
- 48. Tu quoque** /too KWOH-kwee/: a retort in which the speaker says the opponent is just as bad or worse. (“You say I’m [X]. You’re the same, but worse.”)

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