

## Do you know why $\sqrt{3}$ isn't rational?

We will now show that  $\sqrt{3}$  is irrational by supposing that we could write  $\sqrt{3}$  as a fraction of counting numbers and by deducing that this could not be the case. So suppose that

$$\sqrt{3} = \frac{A}{B}$$

where A and B are counting numbers. Then

$$3 = \left(\frac{A}{B}\right)^2$$

so 
$$3 = \frac{A^2}{B^2}$$

By multiplying both sides of this equation by  $B^2$ , we have

$$3 \cdot B^2 = A^2$$

Now imagine factoring A and B into product of prime numbers.

Then  $A^2$  has an even number of prime factors because it has twice as many prime factors as A does. For example, if A were 42, then

$$A = 2 \cdot 3 \cdot 7$$

and 
$$A^2 = 2 \cdot 3 \cdot 7 \cdot 2 \cdot 3 \cdot 7$$

which has 6 prime factors, twice as many as A. Similarly  $3 \cdot B^2$  has an odd number of prime factors because it has one more than twice as many prime factors as B. For example, if B were 35, then

$$B = 5 \cdot 7$$

and 
$$3 \cdot B^2 = 3 \cdot 5 \cdot 7 \cdot 5 \cdot 7$$

which has 5 prime factors, one more than twice as many as B.

But if  $3 \cdot B^2$  has an odd number of prime factors and  $A^2$  has an even number of prime factors then it cannot be the case that

$$3 \cdot B^2 = A^2$$

Therefore, it cannot be the case that

$$\sqrt{3} = \frac{A}{B}$$

where A and B are counting numbers. Thus,  $\sqrt{3}$  is irrational.