**Question: What is meant by Informal Fallacy? Discuss three types of informal fallacies.**

**Answer:** Informal fallacy is a pattern of mistake that is made in the everyday use of language, in speaking as well as writing. It originates in a reasoning error other than a flaw in the logical form of the argument. Very often it involves bringing irrelevant information into an argument or it is based on assumptions that, when examined, prove to be incorrect. Arguments containing informal fallacies may be formally [valid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Validity), but still fallacious. Here is an example of an informal fallacy:

Geological events produce rock. (premise)

Rock is a type of music. (premise)

Geological events produce music. (conclusion)

The premises in this argument are true and lead up to the conclusion, but still the conclusion is false. When we examine the content, it is the usage of the word ‘rock’ in two different senses which is causing the confusion.

Following are three important informal fallacies along with their examples:

## a) Ad Hominem: Ad Hominem is a Latin term meaning ‘to the man.’ This fallacy occurs when, instead of dealing with someone's argument, one makes an irrelevant attack on the person or some aspect of the person who is making the argument. It usually takes the form of an attack on the opponent's character or personal traits in an attempt to undermine their argument. It is an error because the character of an opponent is logically irrelevant to the truth or falsity of what that person asserts, or to the validity or the invalidity of his reasoning. Following are some examples of this fallacy:

## Using gender as a means to devalue an argument from an opposing gender - "This is a female issue. As a man, how can you have an opinion about this?"

## Stating that one's age disqualifies him from being able to make an intelligent or meaningful argument - "You are just too young to understand this."

## b) Appeal to Emotion: An appeal to emotion is a specific type of fallacy in which one manipulates another's emotions to win an argument. Emotional appeals do not rely on facts or evidence; rather, they rely on playing on emotions.  This often takes the form of emotively charged language to arouse strong feelings that may lead an audience to accept its conclusion. Appeals to emotion include appeals to fear, envy, hatred, pity, pride etc., to hide the fact that no compelling rational reason exists for one's position. Following are some examples of this fallacy:

## A child does not want to eat her dinner, but her mother persuades her by asking her to think of all the starving children in the world who do not have food at all.

## A political advertisement that shows the candidate shaking hands with the community members as he attends a religious ceremony.

### c) Hasty Generalization: Hasty generalization is one of the most common logical fallacies we encounter at work, study and home. It is a [fallacy](https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-a-fallacy-1690849) in which a [conclusion](https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-conclusion-argument-1689783) is justified by insufficient or biased [evidence](https://www.thoughtco.com/evidence-argument-term-1690682). It is also called an insufficient sample fallacy. We commit hasty generalization when we draw conclusions about all the persons or things in a given class on the basis of our knowledge about only one (or very few) of the members of that class. This fallacy usually follows the pattern:

X is true for A.

X is true for B.

Therefore, X is true for C, D, E, etc.

Following are some examples of this fallacy:

1. My brother eats a lot of pizza and he is healthy, which leads me to conclude that pizzas are healthy and don't really make a person fat. However, I don't have a large enough sample population to make this claim. I have hastily generalized based on one person.
2. Another example could be of a child who thinks that all old people must be computer illiterate, just because his grandparents do not know how to use a computer.

To conclude, informal fallacies are a matter of unclear expression. They are created due to misuse of language and of evidence. Informal fallacies generally occur in inductive arguments and cannot be reduced to symbolic formulae. Because there are an almost infinite variety of inductive arguments, there is a much higher number of informal fallacies than that of formal ones.