In statistics, naive Bayes classifiers are a family of simple "probabilistic classifiers" based on applying Bayes' theorem with strong (naïve) independence assumptions between the features (see Bayes classifier). They are among the simplest Bayesian network models, but coupled with kernel density estimation, they can achieve higher accuracy levels.

Naïve Bayes classifiers are highly scalable, requiring a number of parameters linear in the number of variables (features/predictors) in a learning problem. Maximum-likelihood training can be done by evaluating a closed-form expression,:718 which takes linear time, rather than by expensive iterative approximation as used for many other types of classifiers.

In the statistics and computer science literature, naive Bayes models are known under a variety of names, including simple Bayes and independence Bayes. All these names reference the use of Bayes' theorem in the classifier's decision rule, but naïve Bayes is not (necessarily) a Bayesian method.

Naive Bayes is a simple technique for constructing classifiers: models that assign class labels to problem instances, represented as vectors of feature values, where the class labels are drawn from some finite set. There is not a single algorithm for training such classifiers, but a family of algorithms based on a common principle: all naive Bayes classifiers assume that the value of a particular feature is independent of the value of any other feature, given the class variable. For example, a fruit may be considered to be an apple if it is red, round, and about 10 cm in diameter. A naive Bayes classifier considers each of these features to contribute independently to the probability that this fruit is an apple, regardless of any possible correlations between the color, roundness, and diameter features.

For some types of probability models, naive Bayes classifiers can be trained very efficiently in a supervised learning setting. In many practical applications, parameter estimation for naive Bayes models uses the method of maximum likelihood; in other words, one can work with the naive Bayes model without accepting Bayesian probability or using any Bayesian methods.

Despite their naive design and apparently oversimplified assumptions, naive Bayes classifiers have worked quite well in many complex real-world situations. In 2004, an analysis of the Bayesian classification problem showed that there are sound theoretical reasons for the apparently implausible efficacy of naive Bayes classifiers. Still, a comprehensive comparison with other classification algorithms in 2006 showed that Bayes classification is outperformed by other approaches, such as boosted trees or random forests.

An advantage of naive Bayes is that it only requires a small number of training data to estimate the parameters necessary for classification.