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na·ive or **na·ïve**  (nā·ēv , nā-) also **na·if** or **na·ïf** (nā·ēf , nā-)

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adj.
1. Lacking worldly experience and understanding, especially:
a. Simple and guileless; artless: *a child with a naive charm.*
b. Unsuspecting or credulous: *naive victims of the scam.*
2. Showing or characterized by a lack of sophistication and critical judgment: *"this extravagance of metaphors, with its naive bombast" (H.L. Mencken).*
3. Not having experienced or been subjected to something, as:
a. Not previously subjected to experiments: *testing naive mice.*
b. Not having previously taken or received a particular drug: *patients naive to antipsychotic medication.*
n.
One who is artless, credulous, or uncritical.

[French *naïve*, feminine of *naïf*, from Old French *naif*, natural, native, from Latin *nātīvus*, native, rustic, from *nātus*, past participle of *nāscī*, to be born; see **gena-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots.](#)]

na·ive ly *adv.*
na·ive ness *n.*

Synonyms: naive, simple, ingenuous, unsophisticated, natural, unaffected, guileless, artless

These adjectives mean free from guile, cunning, or sham. *Naive* sometimes connotes a credulity that impedes effective functioning in a practical world: *"this naive simple creature, with his straightforward and friendly eyes so eager to believe appearances"* (Arnold Bennett).

Simple stresses absence of complexity, artifice, pretentiousness, or dissimulation: *"Those of highest worth and breeding are most simple in manner and attire"* (Francis Parkman). *"Among simple people she had the reputation of being a prodigy of information"* (Harriet Beecher Stowe).

Ingenuous denotes childlike directness, simplicity, and innocence; it connotes an inability to mask one's feelings: *an ingenuous admission of responsibility.* *Unsophisticated* indicates absence of worldliness: *the astonishment of unsophisticated tourists at the tall buildings.* *Natural* stresses spontaneity that is the result of freedom from self-consciousness or inhibitions: *"When Kavanagh was present, Alice was happy, but embarrassed; Cecilia, joyous and natural"* ([Henry Wadsworth Longfellow](#)).

Unaffected implies sincerity and lack of affectation: *"With men he can be rational and unaffected, but when he has ladies to please, every feature works"* (Jane Austen).

Guileless signifies absence of insidious or treacherous cunning: *a guileless, disarming look.* *Artless* stresses absence of plan or purpose and suggests unconcern for or lack of awareness of the reaction produced in others: *a child of artless grace and simple goodness.*

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Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

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