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dictionary

of the
English
Language



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de·fy  (dĭ-fī)

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tr.v. **de·fied, de·fy·ing, de·fies**

1.

a. To oppose or resist with boldness and assurance: *defied the blockade by sailing straight through it.*

b. To refuse to submit to or cooperate with: *defied the court order by leaving the country.*

2. To be beyond the application or scope of; be contrary or resistant to: *an act that defies explanation; a problem that defies any conventional approach.*

3. To challenge or dare (someone) to do something: *She defied her accusers to prove their charges.*

[Middle English *defien*, from Old French *desfier*, from Vulgar Latin **disfīdāre* : Latin *dis-*, *dis-* + Latin *fīdus*, faithful; see **bheidh-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

Synonyms: defy, brave, dare, face

These verbs mean to confront boldly and courageously: *a writer who defied the wrath of the authorities; a composer braving all criticism; explorers who dared the unknown; sailors who faced the dangers of the storm squarely.*

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Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

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:

[Indo-European Roots](#)

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The Indo-European appendix covers nearly half of the Indo-European roots that have left their mark on English words. A more complete treatment of Indo-European roots and the English words derived from them is available in our [Dictionary of Indo-European Roots](#).

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