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foil ¹ (foil)

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tr.v. **foiled**, **foil-ing**, **foils**

1. To prevent from being successful; thwart: *The alarm system foiled the thieves' robbery attempt.*
2. To obscure or confuse (a trail or scent) so as to evade pursuers.

n.

Archaic

1. A repulse; a setback.
2. The trail or scent of an animal.

[Middle English *foilen*, to trample, defile, variant of *filen*, to defile; see [FILE](#)³.]

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foil ² (foil)

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n.

1. Metal that has been formed into a thin, flexible sheet: *aluminum foil*.
2. A thin layer of polished metal placed under a displayed gem to lend it brilliance.
3. One that stands in contrast to and emphasizes the distinctive characteristics of another: *"I am resolved my husband shall not be a rival, but a foil to me" (Charlotte Brontë)*.
4. The reflective metal coating on the back of a glass mirror.
5. *Architecture* A curvilinear, often lobelike figure or space formed between the cusps of intersecting arcs, found especially in Gothic tracery and Moorish ornament.

6.

a. An airfoil.

b. *Nautical* A hydrofoil.

tr.v. **foiled**, **foil-ing**, **foils**

1. To cover or back with foil.
2. To wrap (strands of hair) in pieces of foil in order to isolate them after bleach or color has been applied.
3. To set off by contrast.

[Middle English, from Old French *foille*, from Latin *folia*, pl. of *folium*, leaf; see [bhel](#)-³ [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

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foil ³ (foil)

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n.

1. A fencing sword having a usually circular guard and a thin, flexible four-sided blade with a button on the tip to prevent injury.
2. often **foils** The art or sport of fencing with such a sword: *a contest at foils*.

[Origin unknown.]

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Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

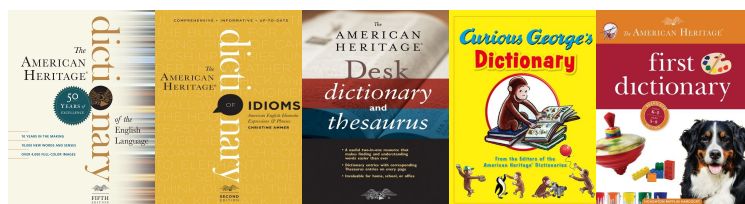
Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

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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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