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fer·ret¹  (fěĭ ĭt)

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n.

1. A domesticated mustelid mammal (*Mustela furo* syn. *Mustela putorius* subsp. *furo*) with an elongated flexible body, often kept as a pet and sometimes trained to hunt rats or rabbits.
2. A black-footed ferret.

v. **fer·ret·ed**, **fer·ret·ing**, **fer·rets**

v.tr.

1.

- a. To hunt (rabbits, for example) with ferrets.
 - b. To drive out, as from a hiding place; expel.
2. To uncover and bring to light by searching. Often used with *out*: "Their work merely points the way for others to ferret out the core components of all proteins" ([Natalie Angier](#)).
 3. To hound or harry persistently; worry.

v.intr.

1. To engage in hunting with ferrets.
2. To search intensively.

[Middle English *furet*, *ferret*, from Old French *furet*, from Vulgar Latin **fūrītus*, diminutive of Latin *fūr*, thief; see **bher**-¹ [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

fer ret·er *n.*

fer ret·y *adj.*

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fer·ret²  (fěĭ ĭt) also **fer·ret·ing** (-ĭ-tĭng)

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n.

A narrow piece of tape used to bind or edge fabric.

[Probably alteration of Italian *fioretti*, floss silk, pl. of *fioretto*, diminutive of *fiore*, flower, from Latin *flōs*, *flōr*-, flower; see **bhel**-³ [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

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Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

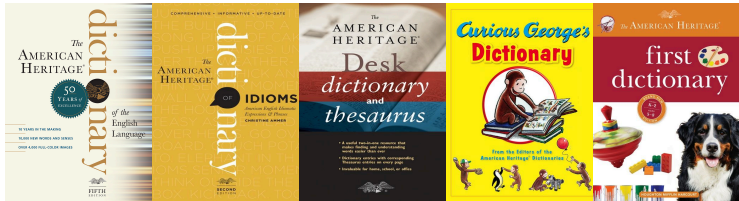
Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

[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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