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tear¹  (târ)

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v. **tore** (tôr), **torn** (tôrn), **tear·ing**, **tears**

v.tr.

1.

a. To pull apart or into pieces by force; rend.

b. To cause to be pulled apart unintentionally, as by accident: *tore my pants on the barbed wire.*

c. To lacerate (the skin, for example).

2. To make (an opening) in something by pulling it apart or by accident: *I tore a hole in my stocking.*

3. To separate forcefully; wrench: *tore the pipe from the wall.*

4. To divide or disrupt: *was torn between opposing choices; a country that was torn by strife.*

v.intr.

1. To become torn: *The fabric does not tear easily.*

2. To move with heedless speed; rush headlong: *tore off down the road; tore along the avenue.*

n.

1. The act of tearing.

2. The result of tearing; a rip or rent: *The shirt has a small tear.*

3. A great rush; a hurry.

4. *Slang* A carousal; a spree.

Phrasal Verbs:

tear around *Informal*

1. To move about in excited, often angry haste.

2. To lead a wild life.

tear at

1. To pull at or attack violently: *The dog tore at the meat.*

2. To distress greatly: *Their plight tore at his heart.*

tear away

To remove (oneself, for example) unwillingly or reluctantly.

tear down

1. To demolish: *tear down old tenements.*

2. To take apart; disassemble: *tear down an engine.*

3. To vilify or denigrate.

tear into

1. To attack with great energy: *tore into his opponent.*

2. To begin to do or eat something with great energy: *tore into the meal.*

tear off *Informal*

To produce hurriedly and casually: *tearing off article after news article.*

tear up

1. To tear to pieces.

2. To make an opening in: *tore up the sidewalk to add a drain.*

Idioms:

on a tear

In a state of intense, sustained activity: *"After the Olympics, Bikila went on a tear, winning twelve of his next thirteen marathons" (Cameron Stracher).*

tear (one's) hair

To be greatly upset or distressed.

[Middle English *teren*, from Old English *teran*; see **der-** in the Appendix of Indo-European roots.]

tear *er n.*

Synonyms: [tear](#)¹, [rip](#)¹, [rend](#), [split](#), [cleave](#)¹

These verbs mean to separate or pull apart by force. *Tear* involves pulling something apart or into pieces: "*She tore the letter in shreds*" (Edith Wharton).

Rip implies rough or forcible tearing: *Carpenters ripped up the old floorboards*. *Rend* usually refers to violent tearing or wrenching apart and often appears in figurative contexts: *The air was rent by thunder*. *The party was rent by factionalism*. To *split* is to cut or break something into parts or layers, especially along its entire length or along a natural line of division: "*They [wood stumps] warmed me twice—once while I was splitting them, and again when they were on the fire*" (Henry David Thoreau).

Cleave most often refers to splitting with a sharp instrument: *The butcher cleft the side of beef into smaller portions*.

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tear ²  (tîr)

Share:

n.

1.

a. A drop of the clear salty liquid that is secreted by the lachrymal gland of the eye to lubricate the surface between the eyeball and eyelid and to wash away irritants.

b. tears A profusion of this liquid spilling from the eyes and wetting the cheeks, especially as an expression of emotion.

c. tears The act of weeping: *criticism that left me in tears*.

2. A drop of a liquid or hardened fluid.

intr.v. **teared, tear-ing, tears**

To become filled with tears: *The strong wind caused my eyes to tear*.

Phrasal Verb:

tear up

1. To have tears well in the eyes: *At the funeral, the mourners began to tear up*.

2. To cause to have tears well in the eyes: *By the movie's end, the whole audience was teared up*.

[Middle English *ter*, from Old English *tēar*; see **dakru-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

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Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

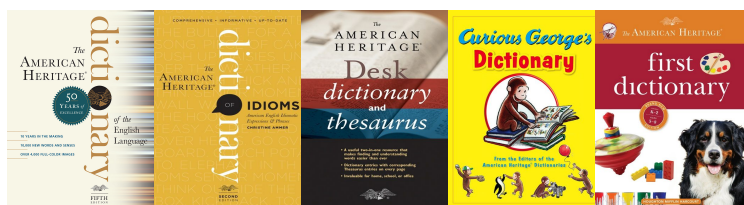
Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

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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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