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dictionary

of the  
English  
Language

  


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**for·go** also **fore·go**  (fôr-gō )

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*tr.v.* **for·went** (-wěnt ), **for·gone** (-gôn , -gŏn ), **for·go·ing**, **for·goes**

To abstain from; relinquish: *unwilling to forgo dessert.*

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[Middle English *forgon*, from Old English *forġān*, go away, forgo : *for-*, *for-* + *ġān*, to go; see **ghē-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

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**for·go** *er n.*

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**Usage Note:** The verb *forgo*, meaning "to abstain from, do without," has *forego* as an acceptable variant. Thus, one can *forgo* or *forego* dessert, though the spelling without the *e* is far more common and is preferred in most dictionaries. *Forego* also exists as a separate word meaning "to go before, either in place or time," as in *The essential points have been laid out in the foregoing pages*. The two words have historically been spelled differently because they incorporate different prefixes: The *fore-* of *forego* is the same prefix (meaning "in front, ahead, before") found in *forefather*, *forehead*, and *foreword*, while the *for-* of *forgo* is akin to the *for-* in *forget*, *forlorn*, and *forsake* and usually denotes loss or removal.

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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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