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pre·vent  (prĭ-vĕnt)

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v. **pre·vent·ed**, **pre·vent·ing**, **pre·vents**

v.tr.

1. To keep from happening; avert: *took steps to prevent the strike.*

2. To keep (a person or thing) from doing something; impede: *prevented us from winning; prevented the disease from spreading.*

3. *Archaic*

a. To anticipate or counter in advance.

b. To come before; precede.

v.intr.

To present an obstacle: *There will be a picnic if nothing prevents.*

[Middle English *preventen*, to anticipate, from Latin *praevenīre*, *praevent-* : *prae-*, *pre-* + *venīre*, to come; see **g^Wā-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

pre·vent'a·bil i·ty, **pre·vent'i·bil i·ty** *n.*

pre·vent a·ble, **pre·vent i·ble** *adj.*

pre·vent er *n.*

Synonyms: prevent, preclude, avert, obviate, forestall

These verbs mean to stop or hinder something from happening, especially by advance planning or action. *Prevent* implies anticipatory counteraction: "*Some contemporaries believed that capitalism and the rise of an international economy would prevent war among 'civilized' states*" (John Howard Morrow).

To *preclude* is to exclude the possibility of an event or action: "*a tranquillity which ... his wife's presence would have precluded*" (John Henry Newman).

Avert and *obviate* imply that something, such as a difficulty or necessity, has been removed or avoided: *The pilot's quick thinking averted an accident. The short duration of the journey obviated the need for large food supplies.*

Forestall usually suggests anticipatory measures taken to counteract, neutralize, or nullify the effects of something: *We installed an alarm system to forestall break-ins.*

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Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

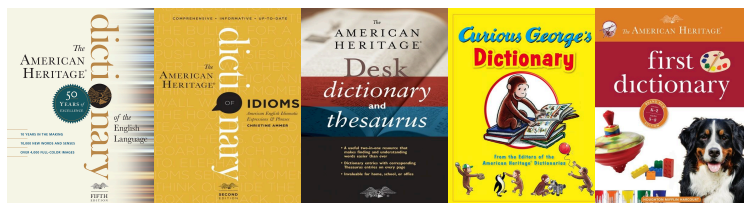
Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

[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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