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dev·il  (děv əl)

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n.

1. often **Devil** In many religions, the major personified spirit of evil, ruler of Hell, and foe of God. Used with *the*.
2. A subordinate evil spirit; a demon.
3. A wicked or malevolent person.
4. A person: *a handsome devil; the poor devil*.
5. An energetic, mischievous, daring, or clever person.
6. *Printing* A printer's devil.
7. A device or machine, especially one having teeth or spikes and used for tearing.
8. An outstanding example, especially of something difficult or bad: *has a devil of a temper*.
9. A severe reprimand or expression of anger: *gave me the devil for cutting class*.
10. *Informal* Used as an intensive: *Who the devil do you think you are?*

tr.v. **dev·iled, dev·il·ing, dev·ils** or **dev·illed** or **dev·il·ling**

1. To season (food) heavily.
2. To annoy, torment, or harass.
3. To tear up (cloth or rags) in a toothed machine.

Idioms:

between the devil and the deep blue sea

Between two equally unacceptable choices.

full of the devil

Very energetic, mischievous, daring, or clever.

give the devil his due

To give credit to a disagreeable or malevolent person.

go to the devil

1. To be unsuccessful; fail.
2. To become depraved.
3. Used in the imperative to express anger or impatience.

play the devil with

To upset or ruin.

the devil take the hindmost

Let each person follow self-interest, leaving others to fare as they may.

the devil to pay

Trouble to be faced as a result of an action: *There'll be the devil to pay if you allow the piglets inside the house.*

[Middle English *devel*, from Old English *dēofol*, from Latin *diabolus*, from Late Greek *diabolos*, from Greek, slanderer, from *diaballein*, to slander : *dia-*, *dia-* + *ballein*, to hurl; see **g^wela-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots.](#)]

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Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

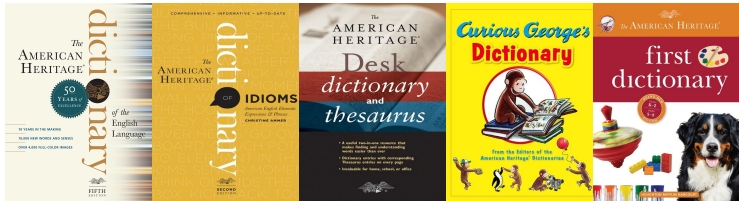
Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

[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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