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de·file¹  (dĭ-fīl)

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tr.v. **de·filed**, **de·fil·ing**, **de·files**

1. To make filthy or dirty; pollute: *defile a river with sewage.*
2. To debase the pureness or excellence of; corrupt: *a country landscape that was defiled by urban sprawl.*
3. To profane or sully (a reputation, for example).
4. To make unclean or unfit for ceremonial use; desecrate: *defile a temple.*
5. To have sexual intercourse with (a woman who is a virgin).

[Middle English *defilen*, alteration (influenced by *filen*, to befoul, from Old English *fylan*; see **p** - [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#)) of *defoulen*, to trample on, abuse, pollute, from Old French *defouler*, to trample, full cloth : *de-*, *de-* + *fouler*, to trample, beat down; see [FULL](#)².]

de·file ment *n.*

de·fil er *n.*

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de·file²  (dĭ-fīl)

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intr.v. **de·filed**, **de·fil·ing**, **de·files**

To move in single file or in files or columns: *The soldiers defiled from the fort, arms raised in surrender.*

- n.*
1. A narrow gorge or pass that restricts lateral movement, as of troops.
 2. A march in a line.

[French *défiler* : *dé-*, away, off (from Old French *de-*; see [DE-](#)) + *file*, line, file (from Old French *filer*, to spin thread, march in line; see [FILE](#)¹). *N.*, from French *défilé*, from past participle of *défiler*.]

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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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