



SINCE 1828 MENU

# <sup>1</sup> refrain

*verb* | re·frain | \ri-'frān\

Popularity: Top 20% of words | Updated on: 27 Feb 2018

**Examples: REFRAIN in a Sentence** ▼



## Definition of REFRAIN

transitive verb

*archaic* : CURB, RESTRAIN

intransitive verb

: to keep oneself from doing, feeling, or indulging in something and especially from following a passing impulse • *refrained* from having dessert

—refrainment \ri-'frān-mənt\ *noun*

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## NEW! Time Traveler

First Known Use: 14th century

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See *refrain* defined for English-language learners



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## Examples of REFRAIN in a Sentence

I was going to make a joke but I *refrained*.

**Cheaper car insurance is out there.  
Come back to Compare.com and find it.**

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## Recent Examples of REFRAIN from the

The quiet Singletary normally *refrains* from c  
field.



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Shandel Richardson, *Sun-Sentinel.com*, "Florida Atlantic starting a Heisman Trophy push for running back Devin 'Motor' Singletary," 30 Oct. 2017

To give a familiar example, judges are often asked to issue, on a highly expedited basis, preliminary injunctions requiring a party to take certain actions or to *refrain* from taking certain actions, in order to prevent irreparable harm.

— Jed S. Rakoff, *Slate Magazine*, "Should a Judge Rely on the Law or His Own Common Sense?," 18 Sep. 2017

On Wednesday, nine Democratic senators sent a letter to Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, calling on the administration to *refrain* from political interference.

— Joe Ryan, *Houston Chronicle*, "Trump administration issues report confirming global warming," 3 Nov. 2017

*These example sentences are selected automatically from various online news sources to reflect current usage of the word 'refrain.' Views expressed in the examples do not represent the opinion of Merriam-Webster or its editors. [Send us feedback.](#)*

## Origin and Etymology of REFRAIN

Middle English *refreynen*, from Anglo-French *refreiner*, *refreindre*, from Latin *refrenare*, from *re-* + *frenum* bridle — more at **FRENUM**

## NEW! Time Traveler

First Known Use: 14th century

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# 2 refrain

*noun*

## Definition of REFRAIN

- 1 : a regularly recurring phrase or verse especially at the end of each stanza or division of a poem or song : **CHORUS**; *also* : the musical setting of a refrain
- 2 : a comment or statement that is often repeated

See *refrain* defined for English-language learners

## Examples of REFRAIN in a Sentence

A common *refrain* among teachers these days is that the schools need more funding.

I didn't know the verses of the song, so I only sang on the *refrain*.

## Recent Examples of REFRAIN from the Web

Her moving speech, in which that line became a *refrain* taken up by a chanting crowd, was broadcast around the world.

— *The Economist*, "Calling BS High-school pupils plan to protest against mad gun laws," 24 Feb. 2018

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The *refrain* was something out of John Fogert *each*.

— Jeff McDonald, *San Antonio Express-News*, "The Word of the Year: Behind the Scenes," 21 Feb. 2018



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length of time grew steadily and has become ritual, with practice and ethic an emphatic *refrain* in conversations with the two Jolliffs.

— Joshua Zucker, *San Francisco Chronicle*, "Yonder Mountain's Jacob Jolliff's side band is a hometown affair," 14 Feb. 2018

*These example sentences are selected automatically from various online news sources to reflect current usage of the word 'refrain.' Views expressed in the examples do not represent the opinion of Merriam-Webster or its editors. [Send us feedback.](#)*

## Origin and Etymology of REFRAIN

Middle English *refreyn*, from Middle French *refrain*, alteration of Old French *refrait* melody, response, from past participle of *refraindre* to break up, moderate, from Vulgar Latin *\*refrangere*, alteration of Latin *refringere* — more at **REFRACT**

## REFRAIN Synonyms

### Synonyms

burden, chorus

### Related Words

repeat, response

## Other Music Terms

cacophony, chorister, concerto, counterpoint, madrigal, obbligato, presto, riff, segue

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## REFRAIN Defined for English Language Learners



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# refrain

*verb*

## Definition of REFRAIN for English Language Learners

: to stop yourself from doing something that you want to do

# refrain

*noun*

## Definition of REFRAIN for English Language Learners

: a phrase or verse that is repeated regularly in a poem or song

: a comment or statement that is often repeated

## REFRAIN Defined for Kids

# <sup>1</sup> refrain

*verb* | re·frain | \ri-'frān\

## Definition of REFRAIN for Students

refrained; refraining

: to keep from giving in to a desire or impulse  
*refrained.*

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# 2 refrain

*noun*

## Definition of REFRAIN for Students

: a phrase or verse repeated regularly in a poem or song

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Britannica English: [Translation of refrain for Arabic speakers](#)

Britannica.com: [Encyclopedia article about refrain](#)

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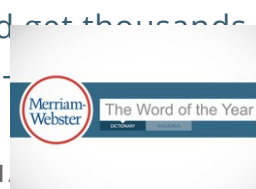
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