

***algiz** Runic: ᚦᚦᚦᚦᚦ Pronunciation: /'al.yiz/

noun · masculine · i-stem

Meanings

1. elk
2. name of the Elder Futhark rune ᚦ (z)
3. Alcis (in the plural), a pair of divine brothers allegedly worshipped by the Naharvali according to Tacitus.

Etymology

From Proto-Indo-European **h₁ólk-is* ~ **h₁élk-is*, an inherited *i*-stem animal name ultimately belonging to the Indo-European family of words for deer conventionally associated with **h₁el-* (Kroonen 2013: s.v. **algi-*; Mallory & Adams 1997: s.v. *elk (American moose)*). The Proto-Germanic form reflects PIE ***k̑* > PGmc *h*, but North Germanic *g* beside West Germanic *h* points to secondary remodeling or dialectal variation in the Germanic paradigm; accordingly, PGmc **algiz* and **elhaz* can be regarded as related but separate Germanic formations. Compare Old Norse *elgr* beside Old English *eolh* and Old High German *elaho*. Latin *alcēs* is an early borrowing from Germanic, probably from a variant ***alhi-*; Ancient Greek *ἄλκη (álkē)* was probably subsequently borrowed from Latin (Rübekeil 2025: 63–66; Vijūnas 2005: 214–30).

The wider Indo-European comparison includes Lithuanian *elnias*, Russian *олень (olén')*, Russian *лось (los')*, Old Armenian *եղև (ełn)*, Vedic Sanskrit *ऋश्य (ṛśya)*, and Ancient Greek *ἐλαφος (élaphos)*, all from the PIE root **h₁el-* (Kroonen 2013: s.v. **algi-*; Mallory & Adams 1997: s.v. *elk (American moose)*).

The traditional name **algiz* for the Elder Futhark rune ᚦ, representing /z/, is reconstructed rather than directly attested. It rests principally on comparison with the later Anglo-Saxon rune name *eolh* and the PGmc word for 'elk' (Page 1999: 71–72). Since initial *z* did not occur in Proto-Germanic, an ordinary acrophonic name beginning in the rune's phonemic value was impossible, which helps explain the uncertainty surrounding its original name.

Tacitus' *Alcis*, the name of two youthful brother-gods worshipped by the Nahanarvali, has likewise sometimes been connected with **algiz/*elhaz*, yielding approximately ‘the Elks’; the identification is attractive but uncertain and competes with other interpretations ([Ahlqvist 1972: 10–12](#)). Tacitus himself gives no animal association, stating only that the gods were worshipped as brothers and young men. The mythological comparison supports identification of the *Alcis* with the Indo-European Divine Twins but does not establish the etymology of their name.

Declension

Case	Singular	Plural
Nom.	algiz	algīz
Acc.	algj	alginz
Gen.	algīz	algijô
Dat.	algī	algimaz
Inst.	algī	algimiz
Voc.	algi	algīz

Descendants

elgr (Old Norse)

elgur (Faroese)

elgur (Icelandic)

elg, alg (Norwegian Nynorsk)

elgr (Old Norse)

elg, elsdyr (Danish)

elg (Norwegian Bokmål)

elgr (Old Norse)

ælgher (Old Swedish)

älg (Swedish)

ἄλκη (álkē) (Ancient Greek)

ἄλκη (álki) (Greek)

alcēs, alcē, alx (Latin)

alce (English)
alce (Galician)
alce (Italian)
alce (Portuguese)
alce (Spanish)

Alcis (Latin)
Alcis (English)

Algiz (English)

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Related Words

Words mentioned in this entry

*elhaz noun