

What Is a Second Cousin?

The number associated with your cousin has to do with how many generations away your common ancestor is. For example:

- **First cousins** share a **grandparent** (*2 generations*)
- **Second cousins** share a **great-grandparent** (*3 generations*)
- **Third cousins** share a **great-great-grandparent** (*4 generations*)
- **Fourth cousins** share a **3rd-great grandparent** (*5 generations*)

Quick Tip: Count how many "greats" are in your common ancestor's title and add 1 to find out what number cousin your relative is. Note that grandparents have no "greats" in their titles, so cousins who share grandparents are first cousins because $0 + 1 = 1$. However, keep in mind that this trick only works if you are both the **same number** of generations removed from the common ancestor.

Sometimes you and your cousin may share a common ancestor, but you each call this ancestor something different. For example, the common ancestor may be *your* great-grandparent, but *your cousin's* great-great grandparent.

This is where the phrase "**once removed**" comes in handy.

What Does it Mean to be a "Cousin Once Removed"?

To be "once removed" from a cousin means you are separated by one generation. The number before "removed" will always represent the number of generations you are separated ("removed") from the cousin.

If you look at the cousin chart above, you'll see that each row is color-coded by generation. You, your siblings, and your first, second, and third cousins are all of the same generation.

You may have noticed that the boxes labeled "cousin once removed" are either from one generation above or below you. You are "once removed" if you are separated by 1 generation and "twice removed" if you are separated by 2 generations, and so on.

Quick Tip: Your parent's first, second, and third cousins are also *your* first, second, and third cousins—but *once removed*. This is because your parents and their generation are 1 above yours. Likewise, your grandparents' first, second, and third cousins are also your first, second, and third cousins, this time *twice removed*. This pattern continues throughout each generation. So, for example, a first cousin once removed is either the child of your first cousin or the parent of your second cousin.

Now that you know what to call your distant cousins, use the chart below ([click to enlarge](#)) to calculate your cousinship! You can also [check out these other ways to calculate cousins](#).



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Some terms defined:

Common ancestor: [Most recent common ancestor - ISOGG Wiki](#)

