**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.

**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.