

## The Difference between Second Cousins and Cousins once removed

Remembering the difference between a “second cousin” and a “cousin once removed” is one of those facts that I have filed away in my brain as non-essential. I think I know the difference, but then I get fuzzy on the details.

Luckily, I now have a handy chart to bookmark in my web browser so that I never forget again.

You'll find it useful, too, especially if you've been invited to a family reunion this summer.

This chart was designed by Alice J. Ramsey in 1987, but her advice still stands today. Here's how to read the chart:

*“The relationship in each box is what that person's relationship would be to you, where you are self” according to the chart.*

### ONCE REMOVED—WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

This chart lets you see visually what “once removed” really means. It's easy to see that you and your cousins—even those second and third cousins—are in the same generation. But when you get into different generations, that's when it comes “once” or “twice” removed—what that really means is one generation removed, according to the chart.

*“For example, your mother's first cousin is your first cousin, once removed. This is because your mother's first cousin is one generation younger than your grandparents and you are two generations younger than your grandparents” according to Genealogy.*

*“This one-generation difference equals ‘once removed’. Twice removed means that there is a two-generation difference. You are two generations younger than a first cousin of your grandmother, so you and your grandmother's first cousin are first cousins, twice removed”.*

Once you get your brain to stop spinning, just look at the chart. It will help you understand.

Remembering what my mother's cousin's children are in relation to me is always a tricky one for me. Using this chart, I can see that they are my second cousins. And their kids? My second cousins once removed. Their kids? Second cousins twice removed.

So, there you have it. You'll never be cousin-confused again—or if you are, just reference them all as cousins and call it day!

Scientists say we have an instinctual urge to learn more about our family members because we share the same genes.

### WHY ARE WE SO INTERESTED IN OUR ROOTS?

The deep-rooted interest in our ancestry is partly shaped by evolutionary forces, Strassmann said. Humans care about family members because they share some of our genes.

*“People can pass on their genes either by having their own offspring, or by helping their kin to reproduce” Beverly Strassmann, a University of Michigan anthropologist.*

In other words, understanding and connecting with our family members can increase the chance of survival for our bloodline.

Beyond that, our interest in genealogy may also be derived from royalty. People needed to understand their ancestry to justify their position in society or on the throne.

*“The fascination goes back to antiquity” Eviatar Zerubavel, a sociologist at Rutgers University.*

*“Royalty, for example, and nobility were very obsessed with creating genealogies that would link them to heroes.”*

## The Difference between Second Cousins and Cousins once removed

The relationship in each box is what that person's relationship would be to you, where you are "Self." As you can see, you, your siblings, your 1st cousins, 2nd cousins, etc., are all in the same generation. Thus, "once removed" means "one generation removed."

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