

**cousin**, *n.*

(ˈkʌz(ə)n)

Forms: 3–6 **cosine**, **-yn(e)**, 3–7 **cosin**, (4 **kosin**, **-yn**, **cozyn**, **cossen**, *pl.* **kosnis**, **cosignis**), 4–5 **cusin**, **-yn**, **-ing**, **-yng**, 4–6 **cosyng**, **cousyn**, **-ing**, **-yng**, 4–7 **cosen** (5 **kosen**, **kussin**, **cosinne**, **-ynne**), 5–6 **cossin(e)**, **coosen**, **-in**, **-yn**, **coussin**, 6–7 **cousen**, **couzen**, (7 **cozen**, **-in**, **cuzen**), 6– **cousin**.

[a. F. *cousin*, in OF. also *cusin*, *cosin* = Pr. *cosin*, *cozin*, Cat. *cosí*, It. *cugino*, Rumansch *cusrin*, *cusdrin*:—L. *consobrīnus* cousin by the mother's side. Med.L. forms were *cossofrēnus* and *cosīnus* (St. Gall. Vocab. 7th c.). In mediæval use, the word seems to have been often taken to represent L. *consanguineus*: see 1 b, 9.]

**1.** †A collateral relative more distant than a brother or sister; a kinsman or kinswoman, a relative; formerly very frequently applied to a nephew or niece. *Obs.*

**a** **1300** *Cursor M.* 24312 (Cott.) Pir martirs tuin [St. Mary and St. John]..Cosins bath and martirs clene. **c** **1320** *Sir Beues* 2578 Men tolde, þe bischop was is em..þe beschop..seide: 'Wolkome, leue cosin!' **c** **1330** R. BRUNNE *Chron.* (1810) 189 Pi sister sonne am I, þou eam & I cosyn. **1340** *Ayenb.* 89 [Jesus] ansuerede, 'huo ys my moder, and huo byeþ myne cosyne?' **1382** WYCLIF *Dan.* xiii. 29 She came with fadir, and modir, and sonnys, and alle hir cosyne [1388 alle kynnesmen]. **c** **1440** *Gesta Rom.* lxi. 261 (Harl. MS.) A! Lorde god..have mercy of my swete sone, husbonde, and cosyne..that he may be clene of his synnys. **1483** *Cath. Angl.* 77 A Coysn, *cognatus*. **1483** CAXTON *Cato* A iv, There be thre manere of cosyne. The fyrst is spirituel as ben godfaders and godmoders. **1526** TINDALE *Rom.* xvi. 7 Salute Andronicus, and Junia my cosyne [1611 kinsmen]. **1574** tr. *Littleton's Tenures* 23 b, *Si parentes inter se lamentantur*, which is as muche to saye that yf the cosyne of such a chylde have cause to make lamentacion. **1599** SHAKES. *Much Ado* i. ii. 2 How now brother, where is my cosen your son? **1668** MRS. EVELYN *To her brother-in-law* in *Evelyn's Mem.* (1857) IV. 13 Though your eye be continually over my cousin your son. **1748** RICHARDSON *Clarissa* l. vi. 36 'Cousin Harlowe' said my aunt Hervey, 'allow me to say,' etc.

**†b.** In legal language formerly often applied to the next of kin, or the person to whom one is next of kin, including direct ancestors and descendants more remote than parents and children. (Here taken as = L. *consanguineus*.)

**?a** **1400** *Arthur* 215 [The 'Emperor' Lucius to Arthur] Oure cosyne Iulius cesar Somme tyme conquered þar. **1491** *Act 7 Hen. VII*, c. 15 §5 Anne his Wyf, in hir right as cosyne and heire unto the seid Thomas Lord Dispenser that is to sey, Doughter to Isabell doughter to the same Thomas. **1495** *Act 11 Hen. VII*, c. 63 §4 Any of the premysses, that..reverte from any

Auncestour or Cosyn of the seid Fraunces. **1503** *Act 19 Hen. VII*, c. 35 §1 Robert Brews Squyer Cosyn and heire unto Sir Gilbert Debenham..that is to say, sone of Elizabeth Brews Sister to the seid Sir Gilbert. **1574** tr. *Littleton's Tenures* 2 a, Everye one that is his next cosyn collaterall of the whole bloude. **1613** SIR H. FINCH *Law* (1636) 267 After the death of his great great grandfather or grandmother, or any other collaterall Cosin, as the great great grandfathers brother. **1642** PERKINS *Prof. Bk.* viii. §506 One P.D and A his wife enter into the same land as in the right of A his wife as coosen and heire to the donor.

**c.** Applied to people of kindred races or nations (e.g. British and Americans).

**1837** W. IRVING *Capt. Bonneville* II. 252 He had received such good accounts from the Upper Nez Percés of their cousins, the Lower Nez Percés. **1860** J. C. JEAFFRESON *Bk. about Doctors* II. 158 The example..was not lost upon the physicians of our American cousins. **1892** *Times* (Weekly Ed.) 12 Aug. 7/1 The toast of 'Our American Cousins' was proposed by Mr. Harry Furniss.

**2. spec.** The son or daughter of (one's) uncle or aunt: = *own, first, or full cousin*, **COUSIN-GERMAN**. (The strict modern sense.)

**c1290** *S. Eng. Leg.* I. 365/24 Huy weren ore louerdes cosines. **c1380** WYCLIF *Serm.* Sel. Wks. I. 86 Joon Evangelist..Crist was his cosyn, and Cristis modir was his aunte. **c1440** *Promp. Parv.* 94 Coosyn or emys sone, *cognatus*. **1530** PALSGR. 209/1 Cosyn, brothers children, *cousin germain*. **1593** SHAKES. *Rich. II*, I. iv. 1-10 Cosene Aumerle, How far brought you high Herford on his way?.. What said our Cosin when you parted with him? *Ibid.* iv. i. 181 Giue me the Crown. Here Cousin, seize ye Crown: Here Cousin, on this side my Hand, on that side thine. **1598** B. JONSON *Ev. Man in Hum.* III. i. 1, I am this gentleman's own cousin, sir; his father is mine uncle, sir. **1655-60** STANLEY *Hist. Philos.* III. II. 120 The children of uncles, or of cosens. **1841** LANE *Arab. Nts.* I. 62 A Cousin is often chosen as a wife, on account of the tie of blood. **1875** JOWETT *Plato* (ed. 2) I. 10 He is my cousin, and the son of my uncle Glaucon.

**b. cousin-in-law:** a cousin's wife or husband. [after *brother-in-law*, etc.]

**1874** L. TOLLEMACHE in *Fortn. Rev.* Feb. 242 The rich cousin-in-law [in 'Locksley Hall']. **1890** DUNCKLEY *Ld. Melbourne* 78 The lady suggested was Lady Caroline's cousin-in-law.

**3. first, second cousin**, etc.: expressing the relationship of persons descended the same number of steps in distinct lines from a common ancestor.

Thus the children of brothers or sisters are *first cousins* to each other; the children of first cousins are *second cousins* to each other; and so on. The term *second cousin*, is also loosely applied to the son or daughter of a first cousin, more exactly called a (*first*) *cousin once removed*.

**1660** JER. TAYLOR *Duct. Dubit.* (1671) 242, I never knew the marriage of

second cosens forbidden, but by them who at the same time forbad the marriage of the first. **1661** *Merry Drollery* II. (1691) 346 Who thus confineth all his pleasure To th' arms of his first Couzen. **1688** MIEGE *Fr. Dict.* s.v. *Cousin*, A second Cousin, a Cousin once removed, *Cousin issu de germain*. **1712** STEELE *Spect.* No. 496 ¶3 No man swung any woman who was not second cousin at farthest. **1752** W. STEWART in *Scots Mag.* (1753) Sept. 446/1 The deponent is first cousin to the pannel. **1834** H. MARTINEAU *Farrers* iii. 43 Morgan believed herself to be the fiftieth cousin of the family. **1883** L. OLIPHANT *Altiora Peto* I. 27 Full second cousin of, etc.

**4. fig.** A person or thing having affinity of nature to another. ***fto have no cousin***: to have no fellow or equal (*obs.*).

**1386** [see 9]. **1538** BALE *Thre Lawes* 271 Now wyll I proue ye a lyar Next cosyne to a friar. **1542** UDALL *Erasm. Apoph.* 220 b, If he had had the feacte to hold and kepe an empire, as well as he could achiue and winne it, he had had no cousin. **1586** COGAN *Haven Health* 279 Other diseases neere Cosins to the plague. **1607** TOPSELL *Four-f. Beasts* (1673) 300 The evill habit of the body is next cousen to the dropsie. **1629** CHAPMAN *Juvenal* v. 193 Glad to take An eel, near cousin to a hideous snake. **1875** JOWETT *Plato* (ed. 2) IV. 380 The Sophist is the cousin of the parasite and flatterer. **1883** G. LLOYD *Ebb & Flow* I. 23 Hawthorn Hall was not first cousin to The Aspens, having nothing of the villa about it.

**5.** As a term of intimacy, friendship, or familiarity. **a.** Used by a sovereign in addressing or formally naming another sovereign, or a nobleman of the same country.

In England applied in royal writs and commissions to earls and peers of higher rank. (See quotation 1765, and cf. **c 1460** FORTESCUE *Absol. & Lim. Mon.* x. 134 And by discente þer is not like to ffalle gretter heritage to any man than to þe kyng. For to hym bith cosens þe most, and grettest lordes off the reaume.)

**1418** HEN. V. in Ellis *Orig. Lett.* i. i. I. 1 With my cosin of Northumberlond and my cosin of Westmerlond. **1477** EDW. IV. *ibid.* ix. 16 Where as our brother and cousin the King of Scotts desireth a marriage to be had, etc. **1513** JAS IV to *Hen. VIII* *ibid.* xxvii. 78 To the richt excellennt, richt hie, and mighty Prince oure Derrest Brothir and Cousing the King of England. **1593** SHAKES. 2 *Hen. VI*, iv. viii. 34 Cousin of Exeter, what thinkes your Lordship? **1601** *All's Well* i. ii. 5 A certaintie vouch'd from our Cosin Austria. *Ibid.* iii. i. 7. **1673** CHAS. II in *Essex Papers* (Camden) I. 112 Right Trusty and Right Welbeloved Cousin & Counsellor, Wee greet you well. **1765** BLACKSTONE *Comm.* I. 386 In all writs, and commissions..the king, when he mentions any peer of the degree of an earl, always stiles him 'trusty and well beloved cousin': an appellation as antient as the reign of Henry IV; who being either by his wife, his mother, or his sisters actually related or allied to every earl in the kingdom, artfully..acknowledged that connexion in all his letters. **1843** PRESCOTT *Mexico* (1850) I. 126 The title..of *primo*, or 'cousin', by which a grandee of Spain is saluted by his sovereign. **1850** R. *Commission Gt. Exhib.* in *Lond. Gaz.* 4 Jan., Victoria, by the grace of God..to..Our right trusty and right entirely-beloved Cousin and Councillor Walter Francis Duke of Buccleuch and

Queensbury.

**b.** As a friendly or familiar term of address or designation. Now *esp.* in Cornwall; hence **Cousin Jan**, **Cousin Jacky**, nicknames for a Cornishman.

**c 1430** LYDG. *Bochas* l. i. (1544) 1 Our fader Adam..sayde 'Cosine Bochas'.  
**1859** W. B. FORFAR (*title*), *Cousin Jan's Courtship and Marriage*. **1880** W. Cornwall *Gloss.*, *Cousin*, a familiar epithet. All Cornish gentlemen are *cousins*. *Cousin Jan*, a Cornishman. *E. Cornw. Words* 71 To imitate the talk of Cousin Jacky from Redruth or St. Just.

†**6.** *Cant.* A strumpet, trull. *Obs.* (Cf. **AUNT 3.**) So **Cousin Betty**; also, a half-wit.

**a 1700** B. E. *Dict. Cant. Crew*, *One of my Cosens*, a Wench. **1708** MOTTEUX *Rabelais* (1737) V. 217 Cousins, Cullies, Stallions and Belli-bumpers. **1749** GOADBY *Bampfylde M. Carew* xv, One of the sisters of that order of mendicants commonly called Cousin Betties. *Ibid.* xix, A gay bachelor, who..was a great admirer of that order of Female Travellers called Cousin Betties. **1847-78** HALLIWELL s.v., *Cousin Betty*, or *Cousin Tom*, a bedlamite beggar; now applied to a mad woman or man. **1863** MRS. GASKELL *Sylvia's L.* xiv. (D.), [No one] can say Foster's wronged him of a penny, or gave short measure to a child or a Cousin Betty.

**7.** Phrases. **to call cousins**: to claim kinship (*with*); see **CALL v. 17 b.** Similarly **to call the king one's cousin**, etc. (mostly with negative). **†my dirty cousin**, or **my cousin the weaver**: formerly used as a contemptuous form of address. **cousin kiss-them-all**: a colloquialism for 'wheedler' (Suffolk).

**1362** LANGL. *P. Pl.* A. ii. 102 A Mayden ful gent; Heo mihte cusse þe kyng for cosyn 3if heo schulde. **1623**, etc. [see **CALL v. 17 b.**] **c 1706** SWIFT *Pol. Conv.* ii. (D.), A kiss! marry come up, my dirty cousin. **1749** FIELDING *Tom Jones* iv. xiv. (D.), Marry come up! I assure you, my dirty cousin, thof his skin be so white..I am a Christian as well as he. **1793** L. WILLIAMS *Children's Friend* l. 175 He talks and acts as if the King were his cousin, and he has not a farthing all the while. **1836** MARRYAT *Three Cutters* ii, I only wish I had..I wouldn't call the king my Cousin. **1882** *Pall Mall G.* 9 June 4/4 A person who apparently calls cousins with some of the 'best' people in England.

†**8. to make a cousin of**: ? to beguile, deceive, mislead, impose upon, gull, hoax. *Obs.*

[App. connected with **COZEN v.**, either as the phrase from which that vb. arose, or as a play upon the two words. For the latter, cf. also *to prove a cousin to* in quot. 1600.]

**1580** LYL *Euphues* (Arb.) 235 Cassander..determined with him selfe to make a Cosinne of his young Neuew [app. by keeping him in the dark as to facts] untill he had bought witte with the price of his woe. **1600** ROWLANDS *Let. Humours Blood* vii. 83 And while his eares with Brothers tearmes he feedes He proueth but a Coosen in his deedes. **1655** FULLER *Hist. Camb.* (1840) 117 The said Sir Henry Savill..at an Oxford Act..in mere merriment,

who..was a great admirer of that order of Female Travellers called Cousin Betties. **1847-78** HALLIWELL s.v., *Cousin Betty*, or *Cousin Tom*, a bedlamite beggar; now applied to a mad woman or man. **1863** MRS. GASKELL *Sylvia's L.* xiv. (D.), [No one] can say Foster's wronged him of a penny, or gave short measure to a child or a Cousin Betty.

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**9.** In its use predicatively, as in **to be cousin to**, and in apposition, as in **cousin brutes** (cf. *brother men*), the word sometimes approaches the character of an *adj.* = kindred, akin, related. (Cf. L. *consanguineus*.)

**c 1386** CHAUCER *Prol.* 742 The wordes moote be cosygn to the dede. **1525** LD. BERNERS *Froiss.* ii. xci. [lxxxvii.] 271 That ye shal be frendes and cosygn to the kyng, as by reason ye ought to be. **1590** SPENSER *F.Q.* iii. iv. 12 Her former sorrow into suddein wrath (Both coosen passions of distroubled spright), Conuerting. **1606** SYLVESTER *Du Bartas* ii. iii. iv. 138 All the Campe with head-les dead is sowne, Cut-off by Cozen-swords, kill'd by their own. **1852** H. ROGERS *Ess.* I. vii. 407 A family resemblance to his cousin brutes.