cult *noun*

cult ▶)

other pronunciations

Synonyms of cult >

1 a religion regarded as unorthodox or spurious (see SPURIOUS sense 2)

also : its body of adherents

the exodus cult

a satanic cult

2 a great devotion to a person, idea, object, movement, or work (such as a film or book)

criticizing the media promotes the cult of celebrity

especially : such devotion regarded as a literary or intellectual fad

3 the object of such devotion

4 a usually small group of people characterized by such devotion

the original cult of Elvis

The film has a cult following.

5 a system of religious beliefs and ritual

also : its body of adherents

the cult of Apollo

6 formal religious veneration : WORSHIP

7 a system for the cure of disease based on dogma set forth by its promulgator

health cults

cult (n. #1)	adjective
cultic (n. #1)	adjective
cultism (n. #1)	adverb
cultist (n. #1)	noun
the cult (n. #2)	noun
cultic (n. #2)	noun
cultic (n. #4)	adjective

Synonyms & Antonyms

The Overlap of Cults and Culture

Cult, which shares an origin with culture and cultivate, comes from the Latin cultus, a noun with meanings ranging from "tilling, cultivation" to "training or education" to "worship." Cultus also gave us the Latin verb colere, which meant "to cultivate" or "to worship." The earliest known use of the word in English is in the 15th century, in the sense of "devotion" or "worship." From here, cult came to refer to a specific branch of a religion or the rites and practices of that branch, as in "the cult of Dionysus." By the early 18th century, cult could refer to a non-religious admiration or devotion, such as to a person, idea, or fad ("the cult of Lincoln"). Finally, by the 19th century, the word came to be used to refer to "a religious regard as unorthodox or spurious."

Synonyms

audience followership

following

See all Synonyms & Antonyms in Thesaurus >

Examples

She has developed a cult following.

I long after it had gone off the air, the TV series continued to have a huge cult

Recent Examples on the Web

Cinthy — whose double- and quadruple-platinum records came alongside a dedicated cult following — performed her hit song "Ain't Nobody" at the South Florida community — was 20 years old at the time of the film's release.

— Emily Wise Crachier, CBS News, 20 Mar. 2023

The result is Elton's that pairing can sow multiple times by One, along with several of her cult classmates.

— Abbey White, The Hollywood Reporter, 19 Mar. 2023

And the Prime Video series' fourth episode treated audiences to a little surprise. Billie Eilish's screen acting debut as Elsa, the leader of a MXWM-like cult whose indoctrination of Ruby's family is underway.

— Sarah Kate Ellis, Variety Series, 19 Mar. 2023

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First Known Use

1613, in the meaning defined at sense 6

Time Traveler

The first known use of cult was in 1613

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Thesaurus

cults cult religion

anti-cult cargo cult

cult of celebrity cult of personality

personality cult sub-cult

Thesaurus

cult-de-sac

cult

culch

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Style: MLA

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cult *noun*

cult ▶)

1 : a system of religious worship

2 a : enthusiastic but often temporary devotion to a person, idea, or thing

b : the object of such devotion

c : a group of persons who belong to or show devotion to a cult

cult ▶)

Translations

Translations of cult for Spanish Speakers

Britannica English: Translation of cult for Arabic Speakers

Britannica.com: Encyclopædia article about cult

Last Updated: 23 Mar 2023 - Updated example sentences

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anything machine	hunter chore
mouse cap	grape necklace

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PLAY ▶

Can you make 12 words from 7 letters?

PLAY ▶

WORDS AT PLAY

'Spritely' and Other Rare Words of Spring

'Hoarse' 'Scrutinize' & other rare wintry words

ask Sabeel Yusufali

'Complement' vs. 'Compliment'

The difference between the two is clear (mostly).

cat sitting at table

8 Words for Introverts

Don't be surprised if none of them want the spotl...

'When Were Words First Used?'

Look up any year to find out

ASK THE EDITORS

Weird Plurals

One goose, two geese. One mouse, two... mouses. Why...

Irregardless

It is in fact a real word (but that doesn't mean ...

bring vs take video

Bring vs. Take

Both words imply motion, but the difference may b...

video defenestration

Defenestration

The fascinating story behind many people's favori...

WORD GAMES

Name That Flower

Can you tell the difference between a daisy and a ...

TAKE THE QUIZ ▶

Name That Thing

Name That Thing

You know what it looks like... but what is it call...

TAKE THE QUIZ ▶

Spelling Bee Quiz

Cut pie, soda and winners. Of course, I'm talking ...

TAKE THE QUIZ ▶

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