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coup, n.3

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Pronunciation: /kuː/

Etymology: French *coup* /ku/ blow, stroke < Old French *colp*, *cop* = Provençal *colp* ... (Show More)

1. A blow, a stroke (that one sustains). *rare*. [Categories »](#)

1793 F. BURNEY *Lett.* 4 Oct. This is a terrible coup, so soon after your union.

(Hide quotations)

2.

a. A stroke, a move (that one makes); a successful move, a 'hit'. † **at one coup** (= French *tout d'un coup*): at one stroke, at once. [Thesaurus »](#) [Categories »](#)

1791 *Gentleman's Mag.* 61 ii. 829 A corrupt majority, who have at one coup overthrown all that is good.

1845 B. DISRAELI *Sybil* III. vi. ii. 161 Alfred is the only fellow who has made a coup.

1850 THACKERAY *Pendennis* II. ii. 16 Henry Foker is engaged to his cousin..not a bad coup of Lady Rosherville's, that.

1883 D. C. MURRAY *Hearts* III. 77 He hailed the chance for a grand theatrical coup.

(Hide quotations)

b. = *coup d'état* n. at sense 5a. [Thesaurus »](#)

1852 *N. Brit. Rev.* 16 584 A tyranny..which it required the ..coup of the 9th Thermidor to overthrow.

1958 *Economist* 26 July 267 The coup in which Nuri es-Said..and the Hashemite dynasty were destroyed.

(Hide quotations)

3. *Billiards*. The act of holing a ball without its first striking another ball, which occasions a forfeit. Esp. in **to run a coup**. [Categories »](#)

1770 J. LOVE *Cricket* (new ed.) 5 Or when the Ball, close cushion'd, slides askew, And to the op'ning Pocket runs, a Cou.

1834 M. EDGEWORTH *Helen* I. xv. 133 He..took his antagonist's ball for his own, ran a coup, and finished in a passion by tearing the cloth with his cue.

1850 H. G. BOHN et al. *Hand-bk. Games* 608 The player may lose a life..by running a coup.

1861 *Chambers's Encycl.* II. 98/2 The points of the game are..1 for a miss,..and 3

This entry has not yet been fully updated (first published 1893).

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for 'running a coo'.

- 1873 J. BENNETT & 'CAVENDISH' *Billiards* 5 A miss lost one and a coup three.
 1908 *Strand Mag.* Feb. 194 All that it is necessary to do is to run a coup with the cue ball into the centre pocket.

(Hide quotations)

4. Among North American Indians: A successful stroke; esp. one that captures the weapon or horse of an enemy. Also attrib., as coup-stick n. (see quot. 1876²).

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- 1841 G. CATLIN *Lett. N. Amer. Indians* I. iv. 27 Each one..recited his exploits, and his 'coups' or deaths.
 1876 R. I. DODGE *Plains Great West* in J. S. Farmer *Dict. Americanisms* *Giving the Coup*..the term indicates that it was..named by the old French trappers, predecessors of the Hudson Bay Company. When a foe has been struck down in a fight, the scalp belongs to him who shall first strike the body with knife or tomahawk. This is the coup.
 1876 J. G. BOURKE *Jrnl.* 15 June (D.A.), Making 'coup' sticks, which are long willow branches, about 12 feet from end to end, stripped of leaves and bark and having each some distinctive mark in the way of feathers, bells, [etc.]... in dividing the spoil, each man claims the animals first struck by his 'coup' stick.
 1921 *Glasgow Herald* 12 Nov. 7 Chief Plenty Coos laid his coupstick (symbol of tribal authority) and his war bonnet on the tomb.
 1963 *Beaver* Summer 33/2 Befeathered coup stick (to touch an enemy or count coup was a braver act than killing him).

(Hide quotations)

5. French phrases frequent in English use.

a. coup d'état n. /ku deta/ [French *état* state] a sudden and decisive stroke of state policy; *spec.* a sudden and great change in the government carried out violently or illegally by the ruling power.

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- 1646 J. HOWELL *Lustra Ludovici* 157 These were the two first *Coups d'estat*, stroaks of State that he made.
 1811 DUKE OF WELLINGTON *Dispatches* (1838) VIII. 352, I shall be sorry to commence the era of peace by a coup d'état such as that which I had in contemplation.
 1859 T. P. THOMPSON *Audi Alteram Partem* II. xcvi. 87 A coup d'état as effectual for the time as that of Louis Napoleon [2 Dec. 1851].

(Hide quotations)

b. coup de force n. /ku də fɔrs/ [*lit.* stroke of force] a sudden, violent action.

Thesaurus »

- 1835 J. S. MILL in *London Rev.* Oct. 277 Their tampering with that measure was a coup de force.
 1949 I. DEUTSCHER *Stalin* xiii. 535 The only chance of breaking out of their impasse lay in a coup de force.

(Hide quotations)

c. coup de foudre n. /ku də fudr/ [*lit.* stroke of lightning] a sudden unforeseen occurrence; a revelation; also, love at first sight.

Thesaurus »

- 1779 MRS. E. BOSCAWEN *Let.* 23 June in C. Aspinall-Oglander *Admiral's Widow* (1942) xvii. 96 This sentence..was a perfect *coup de foudre* bursting amidst our tranquil scenes.
- 1936 'R. HYDE' *Check to your King* xiv. 163 Rumours of similar French *coups de foudre* were everywhere.
- 1955 *Times* 28 July 10/6 There is the first sight of it, virgin and gleaming from the makers, and the *coup de foudre* that makes us instantly one with it.

(Hide quotations)

d. coup de glotte *n.* /ku də ɡlɒt/ [French *glotte* glottis] the glottal stop.

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- 1909 in *Webster's New Internat. Dict. Eng. Lang.*
- 1922 G. B. SHAW *Let.* 27 Jan. (1960) 16 After all and Westminsterabbey may have to be unlearned for the stage, as the *coup de glotte* before a vowel, German fashion, is often necessary for emphasis, audibility in a big house.
- 1962 *John o' London's* 19 July 65/3 The much-abused, but little understood, *coup de glotte*.

(Hide quotations)

e. coup de grâce *n.* /ku də ɡras/ [*lit.* stroke of grace] a blow by which one condemned or mortally wounded is 'put out of his misery' or dispatched quickly; hence *fig.* a finishing stroke, one that settles or puts an end to something.

Thesaurus »

- 1699 S. GARTH *Dispensary* iv. 43 Whilst Poor Pretenders trifle o're a Case, You but appear, and give the *Coup de Grace*.
- 1745 P. THOMAS *True Jrnl. Voy. South-Seas* 326 Not being indulged, like other Malefactors, with the *Coup de Grace*, the favourable Blow, to put an End to their Pain.
- 1820 *Blackwood's Edinb. Mag.* 6 481/1 Whenever the baker's stomach fails him, he meets his *coup de grace* in the adulterated drugs of his friend the apothecary.

(Hide quotations)

f. coup de main *n.* /ku də məɪn/ [*lit.* stroke of hand] 'a sudden and vigorous attack, for the purpose of instantaneously capturing a position' (*Stocqueler Mil. Encycl.*); also *transf.*

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- 1759 *Ann. Reg.* 1758 373/2. *Coup de main*, and *Manœuvre*, might be excusable in Marshal Saxe.
- 1779 J. MOORE *View Society & Manners France* II. liv. 46 Laudohn retook it..by the most brilliant *coup-de-main* that perhaps ever was struck.
- 1801 DUKE OF WELLINGTON *Dispatches* (1837) I. 365 This place can be taken by a *coup de main*, and probably in no other manner.
- 1875 C. CLERY *Minor Tactics* xiii. 169 To secure the guns from the *coup de main* on the left.

(Hide quotations)

g. coup d'œil /ku də œj/ [French *œil* eye] :

(a) A glance taking in a general view; *concr.* a view or scene as it strikes the eye at a glance.

Thesaurus »

- 1739 T. GRAY *Let.* 21 Nov. in *Corr.* (1971) I. 130 This is the first *coup d'œil*, and is

almost all I am yet able to give you an account of.

1785 *European Mag.* **8** 468 The spot is a beautiful *coup d'œil*, a woody recess.

1837 J. RICHARDSON *Brit. Legion* (ed. 2) i. 2 We embraced one of the most magnificent *coup-d'œils* it is possible to conceive.

1890 *Eng. Illustr. Mag.* No. 87. 227 The first magnificent *coup d'œil*.

(Hide quotations)

(b) *Mil.* The action or faculty of rapidly taking a general view of a position and estimating its advantages and disadvantages.

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1839 C. NAPIER in W. N. Bruce *Life Gen. C. Napier* (1885) iv. 127 This is my first *coup d'œil*, and may be a very erroneous one.

1853 J. H. STOCQUELER *Mil. Encycl.*

1864 W. H. AINSWORTH *John Law* I. i. iv. 199 He was but a mediocre general, lacking the *coup d'œil* of genius.

(Hide quotations)

h. coup de poing *n.* /ku də pwɛŋ/ [*lit.* stroke of fist] a Chellean implement in the form of a shaped flint; a hand-axe; also *attrib.*

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1912 R. MUNRO *Palæolithic Man* ii. 30 The Saint Acheul deposits, which have yielded an enormous quantity of flint implements of the *coup-de-poing* type.

1923 A. L. KROEBER *Anthropol.* xiv. 398 The *coup-de-poing* being a comparatively effective, regularly shaped, symmetrical implement involving both an ideal of form and a tolerable, rough skill to produce.

1932 *Antiquity* **6** 190 These flake industries seem to be quite distinct from the *coup-de-poing* industries.

(Hide quotations)

†**i. coup de soleil** *n.* /ku də sɔləj/ [French *soleil* sun] a sunstroke. *Obs.*

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1772 DUCHESS OF NORTHUMBERLAND *Diary* 23 Apr. (1926) 166 The use is to prevent the wearer from receiving a *Coup de Soleil*.

1794 R. J. SULLIVAN *View of Nature* I. 260 Even a *coup de soleil* is to be counteracted by the external application of...volatile alkali.

1814 *Q. Rev.* Oct. 202 Many European soldiers [in India] were struck dead by a *coup de soleil*.

1834 T. MEDWIN *Angler in Wales* I. 4, I. got the malaria at Rome, a *coup-de-soleil* at Naples.

1867 S. W. BAKER *Nile Tributaries Abyssinia* xxii. 553 Bacheet had a slight *coup de soleil*.

(Hide quotations)

j. coup de théâtre *n.* /ku də teɑtr/ a theatrical hit; a sensational turn or action in a play; *transf.* any sudden sensational act.

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1747 H. WALPOLE *Lett. to H. Mann* June 26 This *coup de théâtre* procured Knight his Irish coronet.

1889 J. MORLEY *Walpole* xi. 225 The House of Commons is the worst place in the world for *coups de théâtre*.

(Hide quotations)

k. coup de vent *n.* /ku də vɑ̃/ [French *vent* wind] a whirlwind; a gale.

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- 1831 B. DISRAELI *Young Duke* I. i. xi. 93 Oh, what a *coup-de-vent*!
- 1853 C. BRONTË *Villette* I. xiii. 237 Monsieur went off like a *coup de vent* the other night.

[\(Hide quotations\)](#)

l. In other phrases, now rare or *obs.* in English use, as *coup d'éclat*, a stroke which makes a sensation; *coup d'essai*, a first attempt; *coup de maître*, an action worthy of a master, a master-stroke.

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- 1668 DRYDEN *Of Dramatick Poesie* 54 Any Character or humour wherein he would show a *Coup de Maistre*, or his highest skill.
- 1676 G. ETHEREGE *Man of Mode* IV. ii. 72 *Sir Fop*...I have been endeavouring at a song!.. 'Tis my *Coup d' Essay* in English.
- 1712 R. STEELE *Spectator* No. 324. 1 To put the Watch to a total Rout, and mortify some of those inoffensive Militia, is reckon'd a *Coup d'éclat*.
- 1760 S. FOOTE *Minor* I. 26 Ay, that will be a *coup de maître*.
- 1777 S. FOOTE *Devil upon Two Sticks* (1778) III. 69 It may do for a *coup d'essai*, and prove no bad foundation for a future engagement.
- 1819 T. E. BOWDICH *Mission to Ashantee* I. vi. 123 It would be a *coup d'éclat* much more important and agreeable, if he could settle the Warsaw palaver as well.
- 1845 J. W. CROKER in *Q. Rev.* Sept. 526 This work seems..to be a respectable *coup d'essai*, written with some thought.
- 1894 A. CONAN DOYLE *Mem. Sherlock Holmes* 270 There are limits..to our friend's intelligence. It would have been a *coup-de-maître* had he deduced what I would deduce and acted accordingly.

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