

TEACHING READING – a tutorial approach



Can you really help?

Yes.

You may be thinking, “Helping someone learn to read is a great idea, **but** I can't do it because I just don't have the **time**.”

In today's world, who has the time to do **anything** worthwhile?

However, with our unique program, you may be surprised to learn that you need invest as little as five minutes a day a couple of times a week. And if you can track down a suitable helper (if necessary we will assist you with that search, too) your personal time input can go down to **zero**!

OK, let's say you do have some spare time to help out. But you still have doubts. You may be wondering if you have the **ability** to teach a subject as “difficult” as reading.

First, realize that reading is not rocket science or brain surgery. Your student already knows how to speak, and that is **more than half the battle**. And learning to read is not a frustrating process of memorizing a bunch of rules one minute and then memorizing exceptions to those rules the next. And your student will never have to sit still listening to you lecture or read irrelevant stories about Dick, Jane and Spot.

[Insert 1\) Click here to take our 90 second test that shows whether or not you have what it takes to teach reading with our program.](#)

Finally, if you're waiting for someone else to do the job (your job?), you may have a long, long wait. States, counties, cities and school districts are cutting **back** their funding for teachers. Unfortunately, research shows that students who fall behind their reading potential have difficulty ever catching up. These late or never bloomers do more poorly in other school subjects and their drop out rates are higher. Their incomes may suffer even more than their egos.

In the meantime, new labor-saving technology and stiff competition from abroad are demanding higher and higher skill levels from our workers. “Average” is no longer good enough. “Good enough” is no longer good enough.

Inexperienced teachers can take great comfort from the fact that the tutorial approach – a single learner paired with a single instructor — is the most effective teaching strategy ever devised. This alone give you tremendous advantages over professionally trained teachers working in traditional classrooms.

Our curriculum is simplicity itself. It starts at the very beginning with letter names. It then progresses logically, step by step, up through the basic word-recognition and

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reading comprehension skills.

[Insert 2\) Click here to find out why tutoring succeeds when other methods fail](#)

How is our approach different?

Our unique program takes **full advantage** of the inherent **simplicity** of our alphabetic system of writing. No other curriculum we know of goes as **far** as we do to maintain the integrity of the alphabetic principle.

How can we call the alphabet “simple”? Isn't it the **cause** of most reading problems?

No. The cause of poor learning is poor instruction. It's teachers not knowing what to teach. Or not knowing how to teach it. Or not knowing when.

Alphabets began in Egypt almost 4,000 years ago when some genius figured out that writing a few dozen symbols (each one representing a sound) was much easier than drawing hundreds of little pictures (pictographs).

Think how easy it is for us to write – and read – “The lousy mouse was doused in the house.” Now think how difficult it would be to draw itsy-bitsy illustrations that accurately represent this fascinating tale of woe.

Our emphasis on letters and sounds is sometimes called a phonics approach, but today the word “phonics” is so widely misunderstood that we choose to use the term “alphabetic principle” instead.

In an alphabetic system, learning to read words is a *four-stage process*:

- 1) *Recognizing individual letters.***
- 2) *Knowing what sounds are associated with which letters.***
- 3) *Blending the sounds together to create the sound of a word.***
- 4) *Understanding the meaning of the word. From time to time, charlatans and misguided pedagogues try to “save time” by shortchanging one or more of these four steps. But common sense (and educational research) tell us that if teachers neglect just one of these critical steps their students are headed for serious problems.***

Unfortunately, many schools today still do **not** concentrate on the alphabetic principle. Some would even drag us back **centuries** by proclaiming that written words are not so much collections of discrete letters as they are little “pictures.” Students then have to memorize the “shapes” of these words by rote – endless repetition and mindless drill. Naturally, this wacko scheme doesn't work very well.

There are, however, reasonable and effective ways we can make learning to read easier and faster. When creating this program, we were guided by two time-honored, and research-validated, educational precepts:

- 1) Teach the **simple** before the complex (“Walk before you run.”)
- 2) Teach the **necessary** before the (merely) desirable. (“Veggies first THEN dessert.”)

These rules sound suspiciously like common sense and, miracle of miracles, they also **work**. Here are some of our proposed modifications that will simplify your teaching process **and** save you time.

Simplifying Step One – How many letter forms need to be taught now?

As veteran readers, we take it for granted that identifying letters is a simple task. Students first confronting these mysterious creatures, however, may find them as puzzling

as you find the following symbols:



These strange-looking characters represent “real” English words, written with a “real” alphabet. But they are printed in an unfamiliar typographical font called “wingdings.”

However bizarre these marks may appear to you, when decoded they do raise one important question: “What’s easier to memorize – the names of 26 or 52 black squiggly blotches?” This is not a trick question. The answer is 26. (To which a smart-aleck middle schooler might comment, “Duh...”)

Here we are referring to the 26 upper case letters (also called “capital” letters) and the 26 lower case letters (also called “small” letters). Most reading programs today make a beginning learner’s job **much** more time-consuming and difficult than it has to be by trying to squeeze in **all** 52 of these bewildering graphic forms at the very beginning of instruction.

We start with the 26 capital letters because they are much easier to learn. Try to examine with “fresh” eyes the potentially bewildering **similarities** between the following lower case letters:

q a p b d

Each one is composed of a single straight line and a circle. Sometimes the circle is higher, and sometimes it’s lower. In some lower case letters the straight line is on the right of the circle; in others it’s on the left. Confusing? You bet. This puzzlement gives rise to the stern old adage: “Mind your **p**’s and **q**’s!”

Capital letters are much easier to master, so we use them **exclusively** throughout the first seven units. Naming the small letters is taught in Unit 8.

We’ve have produced a **second** major modification that makes learning letter names much more efficient. We do **not** start with A, B, and C. Instead we start with the **simplest** capital letters and then work up to the more complex forms. Can you guess which two letters we teach first? These two improvements reduce by **two-thirds** the time you must spend teaching letter names.

If this all sounds like we’re in a passionate race against time, so be it.

It’s **your** precious teaching time we’re trying not to squander.

Simplifying Step 2 – Where is the V in “of”?

Once a student can name the letter “A,” teaching him or her that A represents the sound that begins the word “APPLE” is a rather straightforward task.

We cover this in “Unit Two – Letter Sounds.” You will find we offer more than a dozen different ways to help your student remember the basic letter-sound associations.

But what about the words whose spelling does **not** follow these “rules”?

Some foreign languages are relatively easy to learn to read because their words are spelled just the way they are pronounced. English, which is a mongrelized offspring of

many different languages, has only 26 letters to represent about 44 different sounds.

That's where many of our problems begin. You could waste a lot of time trying to explain why the **T** in **THE** doesn't sound like the **T** in **TIGER**. Or where the **Z** in the word **IS** is hiding.

Nor could you logically justify why the letter **C** represents different sounds in the words **CAT**, **CITY** and **CHAT**, not to mention what it does (or doesn't do) in the word **LUCK**.

These exceptions could drive you and your student crazy if we let them. So we don't let them. **Unlike virtually all other reading systems we are aware of, we do not teach a phonics principle one minute and then turn around and break it the next.**

Only **after** our students are familiar with how letters, sounds, words and meanings all **work together** – that is, **after they know how to read** – do we begin teaching the exceptions to our previously established phonetic patterns. By then our students aren't knocked for a loop by the introduction of unfamiliar spelling configurations. Students won't be **unlearning** something they were just taught; they will be **adding** to their understanding of the many wonderful things letters can do.

This happens little by little and only when they are good and ready for it.

Simplifying Step 3 – Can Humpty Dumpty be put back together?

The masterminds who dreamed up the alphabetic principle discovered that a spoken word could be broken up into its individual sounds – and then glued back together again, making it just as good as new. (Without ANY help from all the king's horses and all the king's men.)

Here's how it works: The word **FUN** has three distinguishable sounds —
/F/ (the sound heard at the beginning of the word **FISH**);
/U/ the sound that begins the word **UMBRELLA**; and
/N/ the sound that begins **NET**.

In English, readers **first** pronounce the sound represented by the letter on the far left. Then they follow it up — sequentially — with the sounds represented by the letters to the right. Since everyone who writes and reads English is on board with this system, we can all easily distinguish between “PAN” and “NAP.”

Initially, students make require some guidance in blending sounds. After getting the hang of it, however, many enjoy figuring out the mystery of a word's meaning by **themselves**. Success at this stage is one of the great motivators that reinforces a beginner's desire to keep on learning.

Incidentally, blending for our students use goes more smoothly because we've **eliminated** those annoying letter-sound **exceptions** to the established rules. They don't stop to worry over where the /T/ (tuh sound) is in **THE** because in the beginning they are not confronted with **THE** – or any other rule-breaking words. So no stops, no worries, no exceptions, no guessing, no surprises. Just read, read, read...**Simplifying Step 4 – Can you read your student's mind?**

The fourth and final step of the alphabetic principle demands that students derive **meaning** from the words they read. That may not be as simple as it seems. Conceivably a student could name all the letters in a word (Step 1), articulate each individual letter's appropriate sound (Step 2), and even pronounce the whole word correctly (Step 3) – without knowing its true **meaning**.

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For example, a student might correctly pronounce the following groups of letters:

bit pit fit sit hit nit vit

But are they “reading” all these “words” in the sense that they are deriving meaning from them? Perhaps not. To really understand “**nit**,” the student must know that nit refers to a young insect — not something you do with knitting needles. Furthermore, it's highly unlikely that **anyone** can “read” **vit** since it's not a real word. (You won't find it in any English language dictionary.)

You won't have to read minds, but you can ask students to demonstrate their understanding of **every** single word they read by defining it or using it in an appropriate phrase or sentence.

[Insert 3\) Click here to find out how your personal involvement can help create and measure meaningful comprehension .](#)

As a tutor, what do I actually have to do?

Basically, your job (or that of your representative) is three-fold: to follow simple directions; to maintain a friendly and nurturing relationship with your student; and to have fun.

This program is It's divided into 15 units.

The first three get right to the heart of the alphabetic principle. Unit 1 deals with letter names, Unit 2 with letter sounds, and Unit 3 with blending sounds into short, meaningful words. If English spelling were not such a cockeyed mess, you could stop right there and say the job was done.

But take heart: by the end of Unit 3 we have left the station behind, our train is picking up speed, and there are nothing but green lights ahead.

The last 12 units introduce variant spellings of several vowel and consonant combinations, demonstrate how to write the capital and small letters, explain when to use a dictionary, and show how to use context clues to figure out the meaning of strange new words.

In each of the 15 units, you will find the following segments:

OBJECTIVE— Summarizes *what* is to be learned.

RATIONALE — Spells out *why* the objective is important.

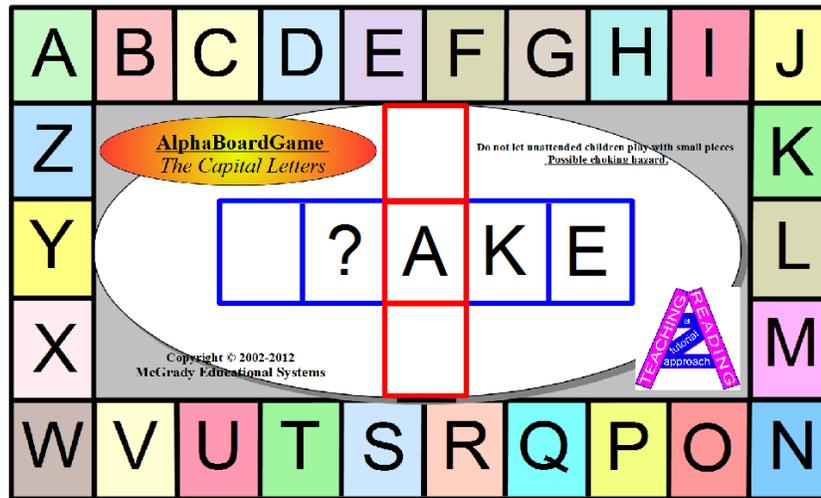
CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT — Fits the objective into the design of the total reading program.

TEACHING STRATEGIES — Show you *how* to teach. Included are more than 150 flash cards, a gameboard with more than 90 games, 35 practice exercises, eight charts, and dozens of hands-on manipulatives.

Example from Unit 6

*Place the following letters in front of **A-K-E** and ask the student to read the resulting words and define them or use them in a sentence.*

B, C, F, L, M, R, S, T, W



TESTS – Show you when it's time to move on up to the next unit.

Our testing program makes the difference between an integrated instructional **system** and a hodgepodge of games like something you might pick up at the local supermarket. Whereas the playthings usually end up collecting dust in a closet, our tests have the important function of keeping you on target and moving forward.

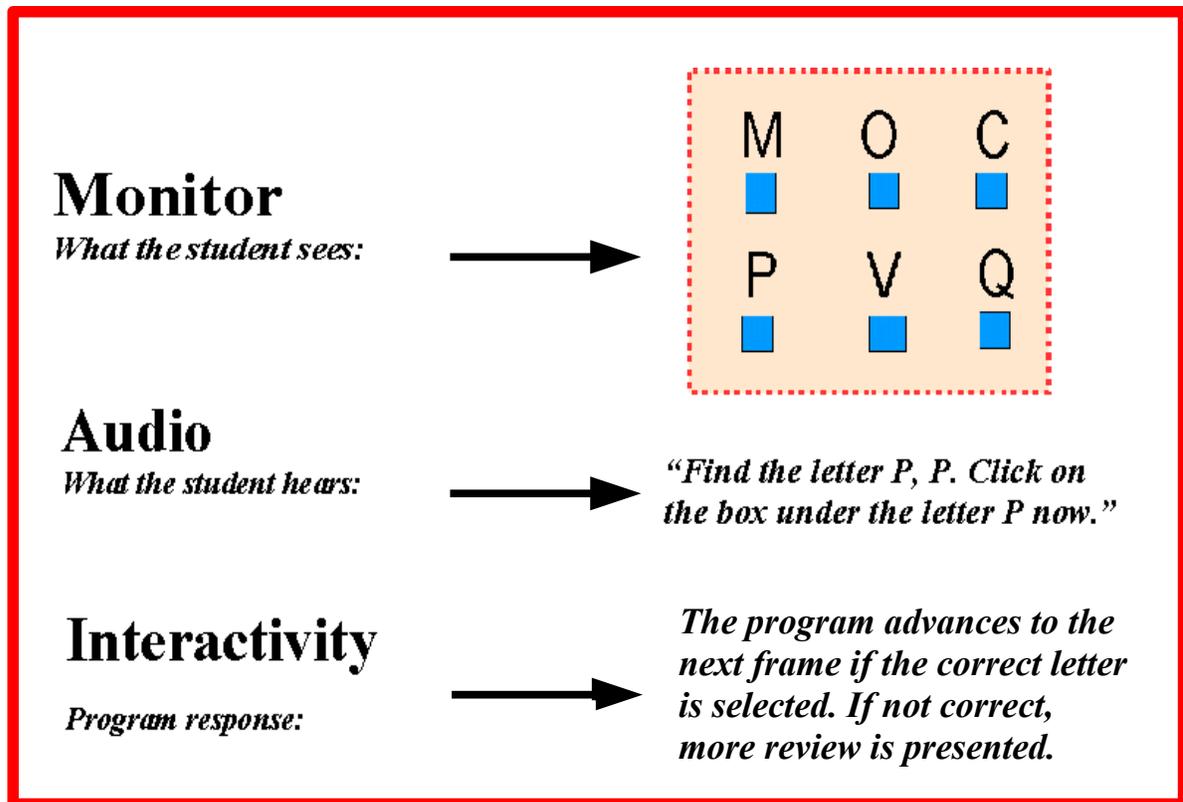
[Insert 4\) Click here for more information about how our tests work.](#)

REVIEW – “Locks in” lessons after you've introduced them.

Failure to adequately review material once it has been presented is one of greatest weaknesses in education today. It is neglected for two reasons: 1) teachers feel they must constantly rush to cover “new” material; and 2) going over the same old stuff can be boring for both the student and the teacher.

Our interactive computer program gives students a virtually unlimited opportunity to practice stuff that you have introduced. Frequently these exercises do not need your intervention: you just insert the CD and let the student and the machine do the rest.

Example from Unit 1 — Letter Names:



Where do I begin?

If your student has had little or no reading instruction, start at the very beginning with Unit 1. Students whose reading skills are unknown to you may benefit by first taking the **Placement Test**, which will indicate the specific unit where instruction should begin.

[Click here for more information about the Placement Test.](#)

Reading builds bridges between people.

By participating in this program, you are building a bridge between your student and the most important academic skill the modern world demands.

Your help is needed now more than ever. United States high school students used to be first in reading skills, and now they're seventeenth. As time goes by fewer and fewer of our students are completing high school and college. And because relatively less money is going into education, this sorry situation can only get worse. If you don't help now, who will?

You can help your student, but your example can be a beacon for many others to follow. You together with others in a vanguard of volunteers intent on "paying it forward," can make a huge difference. You can help reverse an education blight that threatens our culture's social and economic well being.

The American historian Henry Adams wrote, "A teacher affects eternity; he can

never tell where his influence stops.”

Eternity now beckons **you**. Good luck!

Teaching Reading-- A Tutorial Approach

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to take advantage of our

FREE, INTRODUCTORY

offer for Unit One start-up materials.

End of main article, “Introduction.”

Inserts to main article, “INTRODUCTION

Insert 1) Do you have what it takes to be an instructor for
“Teaching Reading – A Tutorial Approach?”

Try our “90-Second Teaching Test” to find the answer.

One side of our flashcards shows the student which capital letters (in large print) are being taught and/or reviewed. The student looks at that side. The other side explains what the tutor says and does. You read and follow those directions.

Ready?

Set?

Go!!!

AlphaFlashCard

	<p>Point to the U. “What letter is this? That’s right, it’s the letter U. It has a curved line with one break at the top.” Point to the letter V and say, “This is the letter V. It has two straight lines that slant and come together at the bottom. Say, ‘V.’” Have the student point to each letter several times, say its name, describe its lines, and trace it.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">6</p>
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The student sees ↑

The tutor says ↑

Card # ↑

Simple? *Yes.*

Time consuming? *No, less than one minute – about 53 seconds.*

Discombobulating? *Not in the least.*

Will your student get it? *Sure.*

Well, congratulations! *You are now a teacher!*

[Click here to return to the Introduction](#)

Insert 2) Tutoring: more successful than classroom teaching

Why?

First, as a tutor, **you** can customize instruction to fit a single learner's special needs and special abilities.

We sometimes think of “special” students as those with mental or emotional challenges. But in a broader sense, **every** student is special. All are different -- not like standardized products rolling off a factory assembly line.

You, for example, have no need to hold back **your** student while waiting for slower classmates to catch up. Nor are you forced to present new material too soon, before it is **ready** to be learned.

So you can go at your own speed: not too fast, not too slow. The pace will be determined by your student's readiness, by proven success on relevant tests, and by your own sound judgment.

Schools often talk about “individualized instruction,” but rarely does the rhetoric translate into positive action. For the most part classroom teachers are still controlled by mythical “averages” and shaky concepts of what a “majority” of their students should be able to manage.

True, there are some successful classroom teachers – miracle workers – who've beaten the odds, can handle distracting interruptions, know their fields very well, and have learned to put up with bureaucratic nonsense. Unfortunately, these exceptional people are leaving the profession in droves, searching for better working conditions and higher pay.

Tutoring is not used more often because of its cost. It is more labor intensive – and therefore more expensive – than other approaches. These days the use of tutors is largely restricted to the children of very wealthy families. Private schools that charge well-to-do parents \$40,000 a year frequently call on tutors to bolster their instructional offerings.

But when used with appropriate instructional materials, volunteer tutoring systems like ours can **guarantee** positive results, regardless of a student's economic or social background.

If your personal schedule dictates that you find extra help with some of the major tutoring duties, such help abounds. Much of it is free or low cost.

Why not start your search for a helping tutor with your own – or the student's – family? Older brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, grand parents may be delighted to help you out with such a worthy cause.

Friends and neighbors? What with the marvels of modern technology, it's not necessary that tutors live near their students. Skype and smart phones and whatever comes up next week can bring together teachers and learners, face to

face. It is our profound wish that soon we can have a tutor in Passaic, New Jersey teaching a student in Shanghai, China.

Then, too, you could consider paying tutors for their help: Baby sitters. School district teachers. Try an ad in the classifieds.

There are also volunteer organizations. The scouts, Big Brothers and Sisters, clubs in the schools, colleges of education, wounded veterans, retired seniors, Volunteers of America, and many more. If all else fails, contact us. Tell us what you need and what you've tried, and we will do our best to find you whatever help you need.

Also keep in mind that people who turn down your request for tutorial help might be willing to act as “cheerleaders;” in person or on the phone. An absentee dad or grandmother might call and say:

“Hi! What did you learn today? What's the name of that new letter on the refrigerator door? N? Very good. You sure are learning a lot, aren't you? Keep up the good work.”

Such extrinsic motivation reinforces the **intrinsic** motivation brought about by **successful** learning. Students **know** when they're getting it and when they are progressing toward their treasured goal. And they feel good about it. Success is also good for **your** own ego and motivation. We're talking about **real** success. Measured by objective tests. We guarantee it.

Finally, it's nice to know you're not alone in this most important endeavor. If you just look around you will find armies out there ready to be of assistance. If you have any questions about **any** aspect of this program, we encourage you to ask us.

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Insert 3) Tutor involvement = better comprehension

Reading comprehension, the fourth step (and many would argue the most important one) is where tutorial teaching really shines.

For the most part, traditional classroom teachers are flying blind when it comes to discovering if students really **understand** their reading material. I am reminded of just how blind they can be by an incident that occurred my first year of teaching at an East Harlem junior high school.

The school's reading coordinator had set up an observation session where I was to read a story out loud to my eighth grade class. She would observe and write up an evaluation based on my performance. Fresh out of Harvard and Teacher's College, Columbia University, I was confident I

would nail the assessment. I must have read the story, “George Washington's Pony,” about 20 times, so I was more than ready.

And wonder of wonders, my students, who had been known to be disruptive, behaved like angels. They knew I was on the firing line, and apparently wanted to help.

I finished the story, and looked up at the reading coordinator. “Very good job,” she said. “Mr. McGrady, do you mind if I ask the class a question?” Of course I didn't mind. “Can anyone tell me what a 'pony' is?”

Not a single hand was raised...

In practice, to determine comprehension most teachers rely on infrequently administered, multiple-choice, written questionnaires. You, on the other hand, should have **frequent, in-depth** talks with your student about the meaning of **every** single word in the curriculum. Even a word as simple as “pony.”

So dig beneath the surface. Ask questions. Talk about your own experiences and discuss things of importance to your student's life. Take **every** word you teach seriously, and try to fit it into a context that is — or can be made — meaningful to your student .

It is **your** input — tailored specifically for **your** student — that makes this skills-based program as valid for three-year-olds as it is for adults thirty-three or sixty-three years old.

A tutor's flexibility also makes for more effective teaching of so-called “special” students (we think all students are special). Please contact us for information on utilizing this program's specific **advantages** when dealing with students with English as a Second Language, dyslexia, ADHD, bipolar disorder, homelessness, autism, schizophrenia, depression, OCD, or other mental, emotional or behavioral conditions.

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Insert 4) How our testing program works

Each of the 15 units has a **Pretest** and a **Posttest**. Administer the first (Pretest) when the student has been briefly introduced to a unit's lessons. These results will show what specific items need your further attention.

Offer the second exam (the Posttest) after the student has had a chance to really study and review the material – and when you feel he or she has a chance of doing well on it. A passing grade on the Posttest opens the door to a new unit and assures you that you and your student will not waste time going over the same old stuff time and time again.

Our tests have special value for students who will be entering or reentering an academic environment. For better or worse, testing has become

a critical part of American education. Tests now determine class placement, graduation from high school, and college entrance. Our tests do **not** attempt label students as smart or not-so-smart or reading at, above, or below grade level. Their purpose is to help students learn.

Period.

Pretest Unit 1 – LETTER NAMES

Test Administration Directions

Point to the first block of letters and say, “Point to (or underline) the letter **M**.” Repeat: “**M**.” Go to the second block and say, “Point to (or underline) the letter **O**. **O**.”

Student Response Sheet

FTMP

ROLS

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