# Teachers sharing resources online

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# Contents

# Introduction

This unit is designed to help you learn about how learning resources can be shared using online repositories, i.e. websites that allow for the uploading of electronic materials that can then be used and adapted by others. The unit comes about through collaboration between The Open University and TSL Education Ltd, the company behind one of the leading examples of such websites – TES Connect. While the unit draws its examples and activities from this site its principles are designed so that they may be applied to others. These include international sites, local sites perhaps provided by regional grids for learning, academy chains or teaching school alliances, or individual school's websites or virtual learning environments (VLEs).

The unit is organised in five sections: an overview, sections on finding and selecting resources, evaluating and adapting them, sharing your own resources and, finally, a conclusion with a quiz.

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# Learning Outcomes

After studying this course, you should be able to:

- understand the benefits of resource sharing to creators (teachers), their institutions, their pupils and to those who use the resources

- evaluate a range of resource sharing sites for suitability to a personal context

- select and evaluate shared resources for use in this context

- create a learning resource for sharing with others

- select a site for uploading and upload the resource.

# 1 Overview

The activities in this unit will encourage you to consider the issues around selecting and evaluating resources you find online. You will be encouraged to share your own resource also. Three practitioners, who use and share resources online to help their teaching practice, will introduce you to their experience.

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### Activity 1
30 minutes

Watch the video case studies of teachers (Kayleigh, Raj and Martyn) explaining how they use resource sharing. Make notes of the benefits it brings and any issues you perceive.

Video content is not available in this format.

Kayleigh

Video content is not available in this format.

Raj

Video content is not available in this format.

Martyn

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Discussion

The use of resource sharing means that the teacher is open to new ways of supporting their teaching and learning, is able to develop their resources with the support of peers, is able to become part of a community of teachers discussing the use of resources and, by extension, ways of teaching and learning.

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## 1.1 Pedagogical approaches

The approach that we take here draws on models of adult learning (Knowles, 1975), reflective practice (Schön, 1983; Eraut, 1994, 2000), social constructivism (see, for example, Vygotsky, 1978), communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998, 2006) and the teacher as learner (see, for example, Cochrane-Smith and Lytle, 1999). In these ways we see teachers as learning together and constructing new shared knowledge. In doing so a community is developed around the learning, knowledge and the resources, and individual teachers adopt roles within the community. Those who come new to the community are apprenticed into it (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Those who have shared many resources and who are looked upon as experts by others, become the

'elders' of the community (Kim, 2000), and may be regarded as leaders of learning (see, for example, Swaffield and Macbeath, 2011).

# A shifting context of professional development

The sharing of resources provides, we believe, an ad hoc basis for professional development (PD). At its simplest level this is through exposure to new ideas, content and methods. At a deeper level it comes through the immersion in a community of peers from whom a teacher learns. Such activity is set against the wider picture of PD, a picture which is changing as governments find new ways of working with their teaching force. These can be seen in the devolution of control for PD in England, the emergence of a leading role in PD for the General Teaching Council for Scotland, the establishment of the Professional Academy for Teachers in Egypt, the national schemes of PD in India, etc.

Alongside this comes the rise of peer-to-peer PD, of which resource sharing is a part. This is fostered by the democratising actions of technology-enabled social media whereby Twitter and other online networks are tools of PD as well as for entertainment (Forte et al., 2012). It is also seen in the rise of the TeachMeet movement enabling teachers to meet and talk directly with other teachers.

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### Activity 2
20 minutes

Reflect on your own context. Where do you get professional development from?

#### Answer
This might include formal programmes of in-school training, it may come from a local, regional or national provider, or from a university and perhaps include Masters level work. On the other hand it might also include discussions and work with peers in your school or elsewhere and it might include sharing and developing of resources.

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# 2 Finding and selecting resources online

There are many freely available resources for teaching and learning on the web, many of which are also copyright-free. The key challenges are:

- finding the most suitable resources to meet your needs
- knowing how to use them effectively
- knowing how to use them legally.

## 2.1 Why make use of other resources?

You may already be familiar with the notion of reflective practice, which typically has four stages:

- identifying a need
- planning how to address that need
- carrying out an activity or action
- reflecting upon the effectiveness of that action.

The Practitioner Research Cycle (Twining, 2011) extends that by adding in two further stages:

- finding out what the wider community already knows about the need you have identified
- sharing in return what you've learnt through your activities or actions to further enrich the community knowledge base.

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### Activity 3
10 minutes

Read this brief introduction to practitioner research by Twining:

What is Practitioner Research?

Write down a few sentences on how this might relate to finding and reusing learning and teaching resources you can find on the web.

#### Discussion

By making use of resources created by other educators, you can learn from their experiences and find new ways of approaching a topic. Your students are given the opportunity to access expertise from different sources, often giving a different context or point of view and potentially enriching or breathing new life into a subject area.

As a teacher, time is a valuable commodity and you don't have to reinvent the wheel. Making use of high quality existing resources can free up time to spend on other activities.

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### Activity 4

Watch this video, which is one of the case studies you watched in Activity 1 at the start of this unit. Note in particular the reasons Raj gives for making use of shared resources. Consider her statements. Were there aspects to resource reuse that you had not previously considered?

> Video content is not available in this format.
> Rajbir

#### Answer

Benefits to using shared resources might include:

- accessing resources that you don't have the tools or skills to create yourself, for example a film or video or set of photographs
- refreshing your teaching materials – new resources are being created and shared all the time and a 'stale' lesson can be reinvigorated with something new
- course or curriculum requirements can change and you may find that others have already created resources to meet these new needs
- accessing resources that use other contexts than those with which you are working in
- gaining feedback from others, which you may then use to improve your resources.

## 2.2 Legal considerations

Whether you find resources for teaching and learning on a favourite website, from a colleague or a social network, there are a number of things you need to take into account before using them. As well as ensuring the resource is of a high quality and the source reliable, you also need to consider some legal issues surrounding their reuse. You are not necessarily free to use and/or modify a resource simply because it is freely accessible on the internet. Issues of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and copyright must be taken into account.

Often resources protected by copyright can only be used in whole or in part with the permission of the owner. The rules on copyright become more complex in an online context because it is so easy to access, copy and transfer electronic information. Anything you find on the web, whether text, an image, video clip or piece of audio, 'belongs' to someone else, and you should check the copyright statement, if there is one, to ascertain what you can legally do with the material.

Using material you find on the web has been made easier in recent years through Creative Commons which provides a simple system of licensing to enable people to share and re-use information easily. This is a straightforward system that enables you to license your work up front and so works particularly well if you are sharing material via your own website or blog. Alternatively, there are some repository websites such as TES Connect or iTunes U that host resources created by individuals and organisations under pre-

agreed copyright licenses, enabling educators to download, reuse and adapt them to suit their own needs.

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### Activity 5
15 minutes

Read the 'Conduct' and 'Rights in posted content' sections of the TES Connect Terms and Conditions that relate to both using and sharing resources found on the website and answer the questions that follow.

1 All the resources on the site have been quality assured.

☐ a. True

   Incorrect

☐ b. False

   Correct

   The accuracy, integrity or quality of the resources is the responsibility of the individual or organisation that uploaded it. It is therefore important to ensure you carefully review any resources before using them.

2. You can guarantee that any photographs, videos or music included in a resource have been 'cleared' for copyright and you can reuse them legally.

☐ a. True

   Incorrect

☐ b. False

   Correct

   It is the responsibility of the individual or organisation who uploaded the resource to ensure they have the appropriate copyrights. As a result it is important you consider the resource carefully before reusing it. For example, if a resource contains a famous piece of music or film clip, consider carefully whether the resource creator had the right to use that material before sharing it.

3. If you upload a resource to TES Connect you cannot share it anywhere else.

☐ a. True

   Incorrect

☐ b. False

   Correct

   You can share your resource elsewhere too. By uploading the resource you are granting the right for others to use, modify, re-use in part, distribute and publish your resource in any format, but under a non-exclusive licence (correct at the time of publishing).

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## 2.3 A personal learning network

There is a wealth of teaching and learning resources available on the internet. They may have been created by other teachers, educational institutions or commercial organisations and can come in a variety of formats – from an idea posted on a blog, an online tool or app, a worksheet or presentation or a fully formed lesson plan. Finding and keeping

track of quality sources of suitable materials that meet your individual needs is a valuable, but often time-consuming process.

A Personal Learning Network (PLN) (see Tobin, 1998) is an informal network of connections, linking a learner with people, tools and resources from which they can derive knowledge and information. This kind of network is not a new concept, and whether you are aware of it or not you will already have one. Where once it may have been made up of friends, colleagues and professional publications, technology has greatly expanded the possibilities. The internet, social media, blogs, wikis and other tools have enabled educators to develop truly personalised networks, connecting with peers and other experts across the globe on a variety of levels, in their particular areas of interest (see, for example, Kelleher and Hutchinson, 2010; Okada et al., 2012).

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### Activity 6
30 minutes

Read Chapter 6 pp.109–128 of Emerging Technologies in Distance Education. The chapter is titled 'Developing Personal Learning Networks for Open and Social Learning', by Alec Couros. Pay particular attention to pages 123–128.

Now think about your own personal learning network and sketch out how it might look. You may wish to consider the following questions:

- What sources do you use regularly?
- Where or who do you look to for sources of information or resources?
- Are there gaps in your network?
- How might you extend your network?

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#### Discussion
Everyone's PLN is unique, being made up of sources they find specifically useful or relevant. It may encompass people, publications, websites and even social networks and be at varying stages of development.

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# The power of community

The community that builds up around particular websites, tools or networks is often one of the key strengths of the website, tool or network. Frequently it is the community that is responsible for reviewing and rating the materials available, much to the benefit of other users. This type of peer review system can help to distinguish the high quality resources and establish the reputation of individual creators and sharers.

# 2.4 TES Connect – Finding a suitable resource

TES Connect is one example of a resource sharing website where educators can share and download teaching and learning resources. It may already be part of your PLN.

If you are not registered on this site, you will need to do so in order to complete the following activities. Registration is free – https://account.tes.co.uk/Register.

## Activity 7
45 minutes

Watch again this video featuring Kayleigh talking about her regular use of the TES Connect website to find and share teaching and learning resources.

Video content is not available in this format.

Kayleigh

Now consider a forthcoming lesson or topic you are planning to teach. Search the TES Connect Teaching Resources and shortlist three to five resources that may be suitable for your lesson. Mark each of these resources as a favourite using the tool provided on the website. (You will use these resources later in Activity 10). Think about the factors that help refine the search process.

Discussion

There are a number of factors to consider that may help refine the search process. These include:

- What are your learning objectives for the lesson?
- Who is the resource for? Is it for a particular class or age group?
- What subject and topic area is it for?
- Does the format of the resource matter, for example are you looking for an image, audio recording, video, document or interactive whiteboard file?
- What type of resource are you seeking, for example an activity, a game, a poster, a lesson plan?
- Is it tied to a particular event, for example Christmas, World Maths Day, Holocaust Memorial Day or Science Week?
- Are there particular key words that will help identify suitable resources?

You will now have a shortlist of potential resources to use in a lesson. In the next section you will review and evaluate these resources and select one to adapt for your learners.

# 3 Evaluate and adapt resources

The internet has had a transformative effect on the volume and range of materials that teachers and other educators can access. Doing a simple internet search can lead to hundreds of thousands of results, and the challenge can be to narrow this down and find quality resources that meet your needs.

This can be a time-consuming process, however, there are some ways that the process can be accelerated. There are many websites that act as repositories for teaching resources, and where communities of users have built up around them.

### Activity 8
30 minutes

Spend a few minutes exploring some of the teaching resource websites listed below. Those listed are a small selection of the sites available. Factors you may wish to consider when using the sites include:

- How have the resources been categorised?
- How easy is it to find a resource for your area of interest?
- Have the resources been reviewed or rated?

Take note of the sites that you might like to investigate further at a later date. Are there any that you could see becoming part of your personal learning network?

Please note that while these sites are free to use, some may require you to register before accessing a resource.

## The Guardian Teacher Network

www.theguardian.com/teacher-network

An extensive site offering a range of community-created resources, alongside a number of other services for teachers.

## Share my lesson

www.sharemylesson.com

An American site modelled on TES Connect. Whilst resources are clearly tailored to US standards and curricular, it can be useful to see a different perspective or approach to common topics and subject areas.

## Primary Resources

www.primaryresources.co.uk

An independent site that hosts a wealth of resources aimed at those in a primary setting.

# 3.1 TES Connect – selecting a resource

The quantity of resources available is huge and selecting one that suits your needs can be overwhelming. The following activity will equip you with tools to manage the selection process.

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### Activity 9
10 minutes

Watch again this video featuring Martyn discussing how he shortlists resources from the TES Connect website and the factors he considers during this selection process.

> Video content is not available in this format.
> Martyn

Reflect on the processes he follows and consider how you could use these in your own search.

In Activity 7you shortlisted a number of resources that may be of use in a forthcoming lesson. The next stage is selecting one of these and adapting it for use in your setting.

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### Activity 10
30 minutes

Consider the resources you shortlisted in Activity 7. These should be stored in your favourites section on the TES Connect Resources website.

Make a brief list of the factors that you should consider when making your final choice. Re-examine your selected resources and choose one to adapt for use in your setting. When you have made your selection, download the resource and save it on your computer. You will go on to adapt your chosen resource in Activity 11.

Discussion

- Has the resource been reviewed by other users?
  - If so, read a selection of the reviews.
  - If not, has the creator uploaded other resources? If so, are there any reviews of those resources that may be indicative?
- Is the resource in a file format that you can open and edit? For example, it may have been created for a particular interactive whiteboard.
- What learning outcomes does the resource address? Do these align, at least in part, with what you are trying to achieve in your lesson?
- Can you be reasonably confident that you are not infringing copyright by using the resource? In other words, do you believe the person who shared the resource had the right to do so? If in doubt, it is better not to use it.
- Do you have all the equipment necessary to use the resource, for example an interactive whiteboard, a specific book, art materials and so on, or can you see how the resource could be adapted for your needs?

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## 3.2 Adapting a resource

When making use of other people's resources, you will often find that they need to be adapted for use in your setting. For example, you may need to modify it to fit with the level at which your students are working or remove parts that are not relevant. Ensuring the resource meets your specific needs is key to ensuring its successful use in your lesson.

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### Activity 11
45 minutes

Watch again this video featuring Raj. Pay particular attention to when she talks about how she adapted resources found on TES Connect.

> Video content is not available in this format.
> Raj

Consider the resource you selected in Activity 10, which you will now adapt for use in a forthcoming lesson.

a.   What factors will you need to consider when adapting the resource for use in your setting?

b.   Make the necessary adaptations to your selected resource. You may wish to save it with a new file name to distinguish it from the original resource.

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#### Answer
Here are some of the factors you may have considered. This is not a definitive list.

• Is the resource at the appropriate level for your learners? Do the tasks, content or activities contained within it need to be differentiated?

• Will the resource help you meet your specified learning outcomes?

• Will the resource be effective in your context – do you have access to the equipment, tools or expertise to deliver it? If not, can you make adaptations or substitutions?

• Would the resource be more effective if you personalised it, for example adding references to your school, class or local environment?

• Are there personalised aspects included by the creator of the resource that should be removed, for example information about a particular class?

• Can the resource be easily enhanced or extended? Could it be linked to or combined with other resources you already have?

• Does the resource link to other websites or online resources and are these accessible to you in your classroom? For example, it may contain a link to a video that is blocked by your school internet security settings.

• Can you be reasonably confident that the person who shared the resource had the right to do so and you are not infringing copyright by using the resource?

You will now have a resource adapted for use in your lessons. Use it in class and reflect upon its effectiveness. Did it meet the needs of you and your learners successfully? Are there further adaptations you could make to improve it?

Having viewed or made use of a number of different online resource sites in this section, you may like to consider adding them to your own personal learning network. That may simply involve visiting them on a more regular basis! Some sites, including TES Connect, provide tools that enable you to 'follow' individual creators whose resources you find particularly useful.

# 4 Sharing a resource

In this section you will select a resource and upload it onto the TES Connect website. This resource may be one that you create afresh for this unit, one you have already created or one which you adapt for the purpose of sharing.

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### Activity 12
20 minutes

Watch again this video featuring Kayleigh talking about how she goes about selecting and sharing one of her own resources.

What are the stages in this process?

> Video content is not available in this format.
>
> Kayleigh

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#### Answer

You may have identified, among others, the stages of selecting the resource, reformatting and adapting it, uploading it onto the website and entering metadata and tags. Metadata and tags are the data that describe it and include such things as target age range, subject, topic, etc. You will also have noticed that Kayleigh talks about the importance of copyright and ensuring that, in this respect, the resource is sharable.

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### Activity 13
10 minutes

1. Before uploading a resource to share with others it is important to check that it may legally be shared because:

☐  a. Some resources may have been produced by a third party who owns the copyright, which prevents it from being shared.

   Correct

☐  b. No images can be uploaded to a website without checking with the person who took the image.

   Incorrect. Images may be free of copyright restrictions or the owner may have licensed them for use under certain conditions. If it is not obvious that this has happened then you should assume they are not sharable. Sources of sharable images may be found using the Creative Commons website or by searching for 'royalty free' or 'copyright free'.

☐  c. The website will be held responsible for material that has not been cleared for sharing.

   Incorrect. The person who uploads the material is primarily responsible for its legality.

2. If an image or other material is marked 'Creative Commons licensed' then it may be freely shared.

☐  a. False

Correct

☐ b. True

Incorrect. There are many different types of Creative Commons licence. Some allow for material to be shared but only with conditions, e.g. the owner must be credited and/or the resource cannot be adapted and/or it cannot be sold. Full details are available at the Creative Commons website.

3. When uploading a resource you should think about how accessible it is to others. This means:

☐ a. You should be careful to avoid colours, colour combinations and font styles and sizes that some people may find hard to read.

Correct

☐ b. You should be careful to make sure that the file size is not too large.

Incorrect. While this is important, the word 'accessibility' refers to ensuring that a resource is readable.

☐ c. You should only upload files in particular formats.

Incorrect. While this is important, the word 'accessibility' refers to ensuring that a resource is readable.

4. When uploading a resource you should make sure that:

☐ a. It uses a commonly used file format and is not too large.

Correct. Both file format and file size are important considerations.

☐ b. It uses a commonly used file format but its file size is unimportant with modern network communications.

Incorrect. Some people will have very slow connections and you need to consider file size. Anything over 5 MB is likely to cause problems.

☐ c. It can use any file format as converters are readily available but it should not be too large.

Incorrect. Some file formats cannot be converted to more usually found ones. You should be careful to consider how commonly available the format of your resource is. There are generic standards such as RTF, PDF and JPEG that should be considered. For audio and video files there are also issues with the encoding process. MP3 and MP4 standards may be acceptable in most cases. Interactive whiteboards also tend to have their own standard formats dependent on manufacturer.

# 4.1 Selecting suitable resource/topic

The following activity will guide you through the process of selecting one of your own resources to share online.

## Activity 14
30 minutes

Think about resources you already have and select one that you think might be suitable for sharing on a website. Answer each of the following questions:

- Is the resource likely to be of use to others? If so, why do you think so? (It may be that it is a very common topic for example.)

- Is it free of copyright or otherwise licensed material?

- Do you need to remove any personal or context-specific data or information? If so, how will you do that?

- Is it in the right format and of the right file size? If not, can you convert it and/or compress it?

- Is it more than one file? If so it may need zipping up before uploading (ie combining into a single file).

- Does it have a sensible file name?

- Have you applied the criteria you used for selecting evaluating resources in Activity 7?

# 4.2 Uploading

You will now upload the resource you have chosen. This unit is based around use of the TES Connect site but other sharing sites are available. You may choose to upload the resource to a site that you use or that is common for your school or others in your personal learning network.

## Activity 15
40 minutes

Go to the TES Connect website and select the subject and age that your resource applies to.

Enter a title, keywords and short description for the resource and upload the file from your computer.

You will receive confirmation once your resource is uploaded and also be told when your resource has been downloaded by others.

# 4.3 Uploading resources: summary

When choosing a resource to upload you must ensure that it can be legally shared with any permissions obtained and licenses checked, ensure that it is accessible, i.e. that it will not cause problems for people reading it, that it is not too large and that it is in a format that is readily available to others.

These are, of course, not the only considerations when thinking about a possible resource to share. You will also want to consider how suitable it is for others, i.e. can it be applied to other contexts, and that it does not contain any personal or context-specific information or data that may be inappropriate or irrelevant to other teachers' use.

# 5 Reflecting on your learning

The following activity is an opportunity for you to reflect on your learning throughout this OpenLearn free course.

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### Activity 16

There are no 'correct answers' to the following questions but you may wish to use your responses from earlier activities.

1. What do you consider to be the benefits of resource sharing to teachers and others who create them?

> *Provide your answer...*

2. What are the benefits, in your view, to their institutions, their pupils?

> *Provide your answer...*

3. What are the benefits to those who use the resources?

> *Provide your answer...*

4. What resource sharing sites are you aware of and how suitable are they for your own context? How do you evaluate this suitability?

> *Provide your answer...*

5. Describe two resources for use in their own context that you have downloaded and why you find them suitable for your own context.

> *Provide your answer...*

6. Explain any adaptations you had to make to the resources in question 5.

> *Provide your answer...*

7. Describe one resource from your own context that you have uploaded and explain why you chose this one and what you had to do to adapt it.

> *Provide your answer...*

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8. Explain how feedback on the resources is shared by users and how this leads to an enhanced personal learning network.

*Provide your answer...*

9. Explain how the use of shared resources contributes to your professional development.

*Provide your answer...*

# Conclusion

In this unit you have learned how learning resources can be shared using online repositories i.e. websites that allow for the uploading of electronic materials that can then be used and adapted by others. You have engaged in activities to select, evaluate and adapt resources and you have considered how you might share your own resources. Crucially, you have considered the role of such sites in developing your personal learning network.

As online communications grow, and the world becomes more socially connected through technologies, opportunities for professionals to develop wider networks of contacts and resources grow too. Whereas the initial impetus for using resource sharing sites might be to find ideas and activities for one's own use, this is soon enhanced by possibilities for peer review, feedback and adaptation. The very word 'repository', often used to describe such websites, implies a passive form of storage that, in this case, is open for others to use.

The TES Connect website, as with others, is much more than this. Just as the real value in many other sites is the ability to read reviews and suggestions, think of online retail or travel sites for example, so the key features for professional network building are those that allow for interaction and feedback in addition to the sharing of resources.

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