Enhancing Assessment Literacy with the Time and Effort on Task Toolkit

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Session Objectives

Explore	Analyse	Reflect on	Adapt
• the significance of student time and effort in assessment and its impact on both staff and students' assessment literacy	• the key components of the TET Framework and the 3 steps of the TET Toolkit by reviewing its practical applications through real classroom case studies.	• your own teaching and assessment practices, including how they communicate assessment demands to students, by applying the TET toolkit to your own context.	• the TET toolkit to your own teaching and assessment context through guided activities and peer discussion.

Session Outline

- Time and effort in assessment
- The TET Toolkit
- Real life Case Studies
- Hands on Activity 1: Review your existing practice
- Hands on Activity 2: Applying the toolkit

Assessment Literacy

The ability and capacity for both ***staff and students to understand*** the **purpose**, **design**, and **guidelines** of both formative and summative assessments

Time and Effort in Assessment

When introducing assessment tasks to your students, do you use any strategies or practices to help you decide how much time and effort your students should invest on their assessment tasks?

A: Yes

B: No

Time and Effort in Assessment

Do you communicate to your students the time and effort that they need to invest in various assessment tasks?

A: Yes

B: No

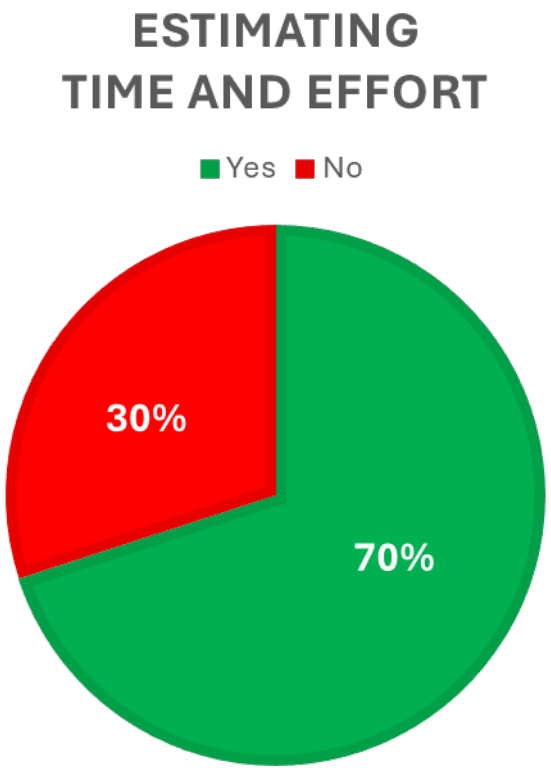
Time and Effort in Assessment

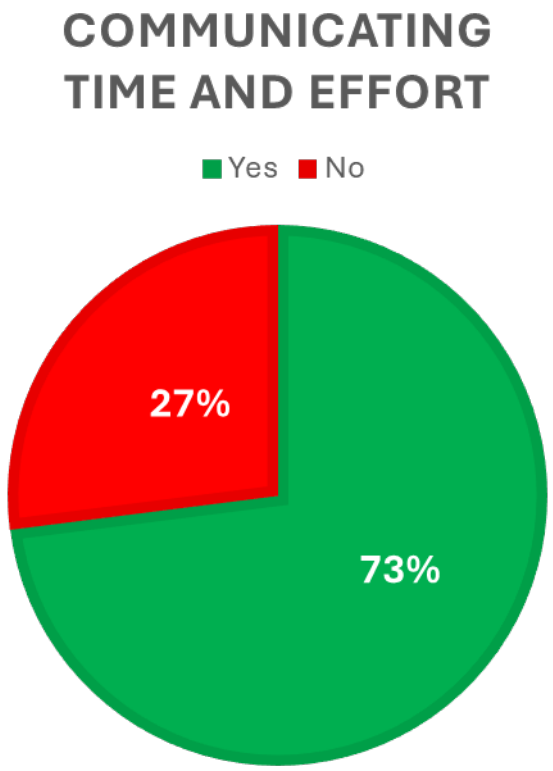
Do you have any experience with students struggling to meet assessment deadlines due to time constraints?

A: Yes

B: No

Time and Effort in Assessment





The importance of **Time** and Effort

- **Appropriate workloads** can support a **critical** and **inquiry-based approach** resulting in **deeper learning**. (Scully and Kerr, 2014).
- Assessment demands should be designed **to orient students to distribute appropriate amounts of time and effort** across all the important aspects of the course (Gibbs, 2010).
- **Student perceptions** of workload often **differ** from the **instructor** and depend on prior academic experience (Money et al., 2017).
- Providing students suggested guidelines about time requirements can help them better **manage their academic** and **non-academic time (**(Michel et al., 2020).

The importance of Time and **Effort**

Mental Effort: the subjective feeling of effort that accompanies the cognitive operations involved in completing a task (Wolpe et al., 2024)

Factors affecting levels of effort:

Interest levels

- A strong **intrinsic interest** in a topic may feel **less effortful** and lead to deeper learning (Kember et al., 1996).

Time and Intensity

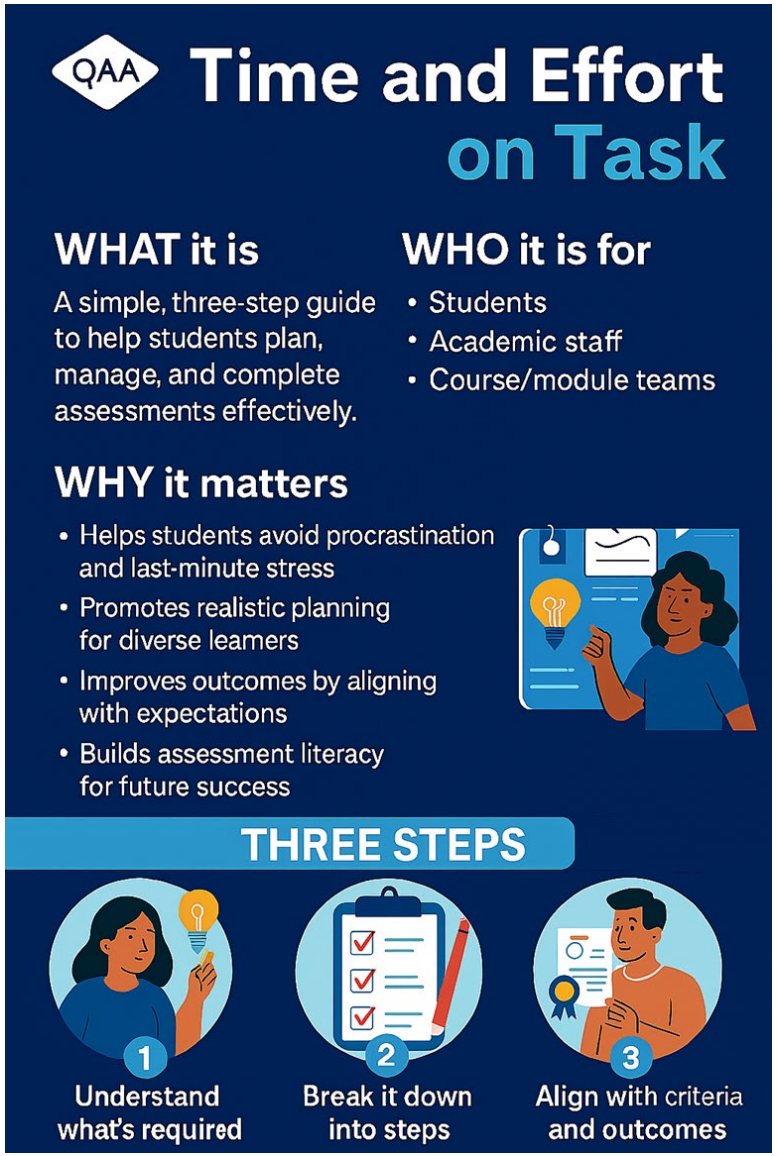
- Duration and intensity of a task increases effort requirements; making individuals to assess whether the desired action is worth the required effort. (Endres et al, 2025).
- The amount of time spent on a task does not always have a straightforward relationship with subjective effort, or with eventual outcome in terms of grades (Gibbs & Simpson, 2005).

Time and Effort: not a straightforward relation

Examples:

- Some tasks may be time-consuming but low in terms of cognitive effort for students who are experienced and skilled with a specific task e.g. fixing a reference list
- Other tasks may involve a higher cognitive load but a short amount of time; e.g. re-drafting a concluding paragraph to make a clearer argument.
- The effort required for a task could increase as the task's duration increases; e.g. analysing data may require less mental effort in the beginning of the task, in comparison to several hours after working on the same task continuously.

TET Toolkit


QAA
Time and Effort on Task
WHAT it is
A simple, three-step guide to help students plan, manage, and complete assessments effectively.
WHO it is for
• Students
• Academic staff
• Course/module teams
WHY it matters
• Helps students avoid procrastination and last-minute stress
• Promotes realistic planning for diverse leamers
• Improves outcomes by aligning with expectations
• Builds assessment literacy for future success
THREE STEPS
1
Understand what's required
2
Break it down into steps
3
Align with criteria and outcomes

Step 1: Staff Version (communication & signposting)	Step 1: Student Version (self-reflection)
Key idea: The expectations on prior knowledge and skills need to be clearly communicated to students	***Key idea: There might be skills and knowledge that you are expected to have, even if these were not directly taught in your current module.***
Academic Skills	What academic skills do I already have that can help me? What academic skills do I need to develop that can help me?
Employability Skills	Have I gained skills outside university that are relevant?
Disciplinary knowledge acquired in prior modules	What knowledge from the course might help me complete this task? Have I completed similar assessments before?
General knowledge	What knowledge from outside the course might help me complete this task?
Knowledge of specific tools, equipment, software required	Is there specific software, equipment or tools/resources I need to complete this task, and do I know how to use them?

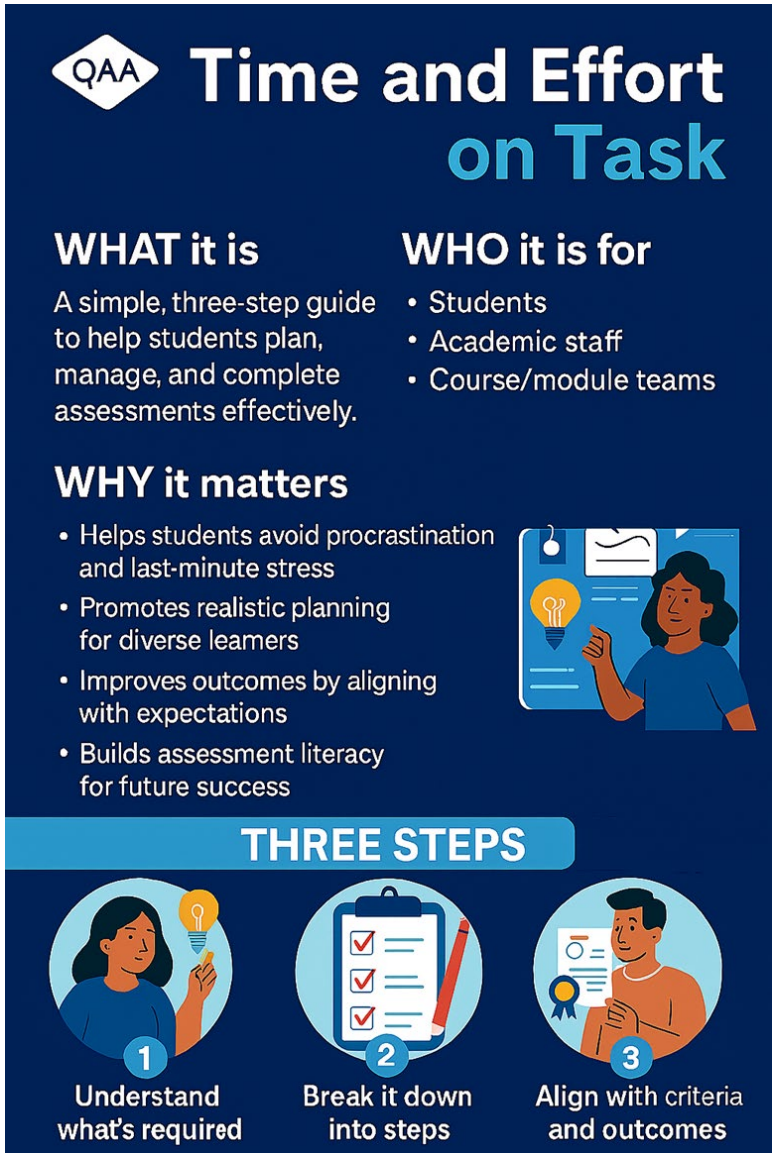
Step 2: Breaking down of tasks into sub steps and resource identification

Staff version (Feel free to add/remove as many steps as necessary. For each step, consider the stretch from prior knowledge and skills.)			
Step	**Description**	**Notional Time-on-Task for student performing around class average (e.g., 4-6 hours)**	**Relevant resources to support students**
1			

Student version *(Feel free to add or remove as many steps as necessary)*					
Step	**Description**	**Estimate your likely Time-on-Task using a flexible range** *(e.g., 4-6 hours)*	**Estimate how much mental effort is needed** *(e.g., high, moderate, low)*	**Target date for completion** *(consider workload on other modules)*	**Where can I find help with this step?** (*consider options from previous modules, or university-wide services)*
1					

Step 3: Staff Version (Checking for constructive alignment and compliance)	Step 3: Student Version (Final checks for maximising success)
Are the steps selected relevant to the marking criteria? Are there any steps that need to be added, altered or removed?	Review the assessment brief. Are the steps above covering the whole task? Have I missed anything?
Are the students equipped to complete those steps? If not, are there sufficient support mechanisms in place if students need help with any of the steps?	Review the marking criteria. Will the steps above help me to meet all of them? Have I added any steps that are not relevant? Could I do more to maximise my grade?
Does the allocated amount of time align with the expected assessment credits? If not, can we make the appropriate changes?	Is the total estimated amount of time realistic, for the grade I am aspiring to achieve ?
Is this assessment task clearly aligned in terms of skills and knowledge development with prior or future assessment tasks?	Do I understand what skills and knowledge will be developed by this assessment task, to support future success on the course?
Are the identified sub-steps relevant to the module and course learning outcomes?	
Are the assessment demands and sub-steps aligned with the level that the students are working at?	

Case studies



Case studies

Case Study Title	Level (FHEQ /SCQF)	Subject Discipline	Data	Conclusions
Using the Time and Effort on Task template with first-year undergraduates at a Scottish University	UG (Lv 4 / 7)	Social Sciences - UWS	Student survey pre and post toolkit use, Staff reflections	General self-reported confidence for coursework tasks increased. 89% agreed they could use it in future.
Using the Time and Effort on Task template with second year psychology students	UG (Lv 5/8)	Psychology - UWS	Student survey pre and post toolkit use, Staff reflections	Self-reported confidence for a specific coursework task increased. 96.4% agreed they could use the toolkit in future.
Using the Time and Effort on Task template with final year behavioural economics students	UG (Lv 6/10)	Business Economics - UWL	Student Semi-structured interviews, Staff reflections	The Toolkit helped students with clarified expectations, reduced feelings of overwhelm, more realistic workload planning, self-reflection and identification of skills gaps.

Hands on Activity

Reflecting on own practice

(staff template)

Reflecting on own practice (step 1)

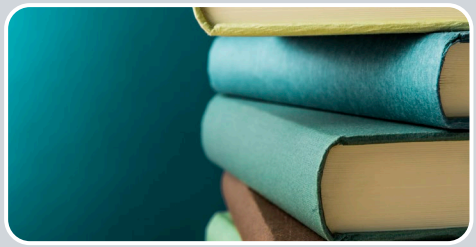
Identify an assessment task that you would like to reflect on.

Use the TET-Toolkit template for staff to work through step 1

Can you identify all the skills and prior knowledge that your students need, so that they are able to complete the task?

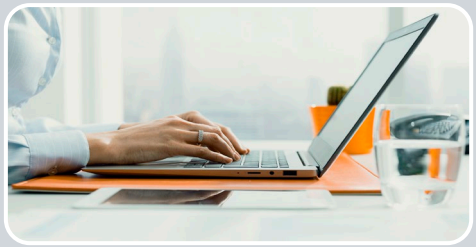
Can you identify where the students can go to develop those skills and gain that knowledge?

Reflecting on own practice – discussion points

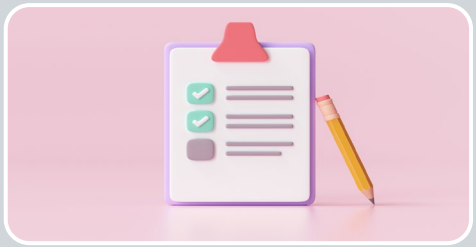


Can you identify resources and support that goes beyond your classroom? Are there any gaps?

How are those communicated to the students? Could that be improved?



How can you support students' engagement with those resources?



How can you help student self-assess their prior knowledge and skill development needs?

Reflecting on own practice (step 2)

Use the TET-toolkit template for staff to work through step 2

Consider the steps an average student (novice) will need to take to complete the task and your time estimation

What resources and guidance will a student require to be able to complete each step? Can you signpost them to the right resources?

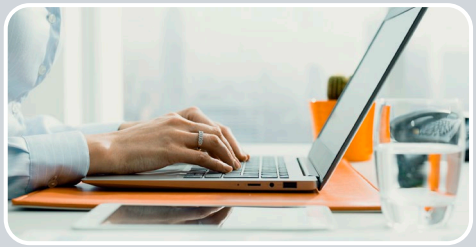
Reflecting on own practice – discussion points

Are there alternative steps and approaches that students could take to complete the task?

How can you check how realistic is the time allocation?

How can you help your students to make realistic plans?

Do your students have access to training and resources that can help them complete those steps? Have you found any gaps?



How can you support students' engagement with those resources?

Reflecting on own practice (step 3)

Use the TET-toolkit template for staff to work through step 3

Consider the constructive alignment checklist.

Can you identify any further actions to maximise constructive alignment, while simplifying the assessment approach?

Reflecting on own practice – discussion points

Can you make any changes to simplify the assessment demands, while ensuring students still demonstrate the learning outcomes?

Do you need to identify further resources for supporting the students' preparedness to complete the tasks?

How can you structure your teaching practice (curriculum plan) to support students' preparedness for the assessment task?

Take it a step further

- ❑ After completing the reflection, make a list of changes that you could apply in your own approach.
- ❑ Organise them by those that would have the bigger impact to your students' success
- ❑ Commit to make at least one change

Hands on Activity

Applying the TET toolkit in own practice

(student template)

Applying the toolkit (step 1)

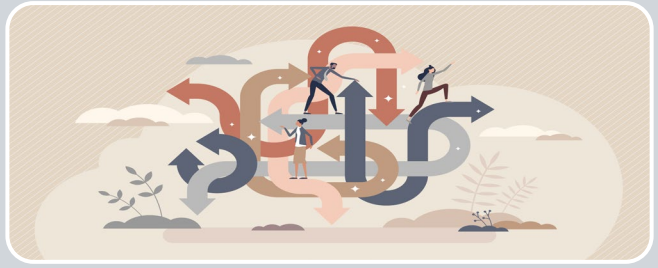
Identify an assessment task

Review step's 1 reflective question within the students' template

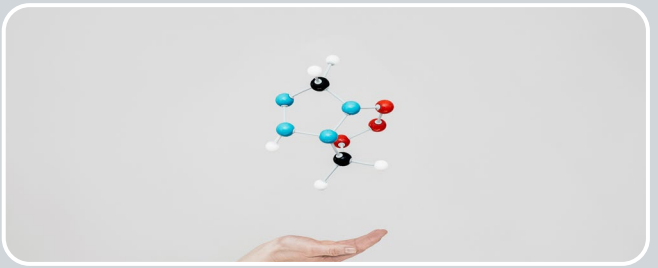
Consider how this can be embedded within your existing practice

Applying the toolkit – discussion points

Can you identify the best **timing** within your course to introduce Step1 to your students?



What would be the best **approach** for introducing Step 1?
Considerations: students' demographics, class size. scheme of work etc.
Suggestions: group work, individual reflection, in class or independent etc.)



How can you check their engagement with the reflective aspect?

Applying the toolkit (step 2)

Review the TET-toolkit template for students to consider step 2

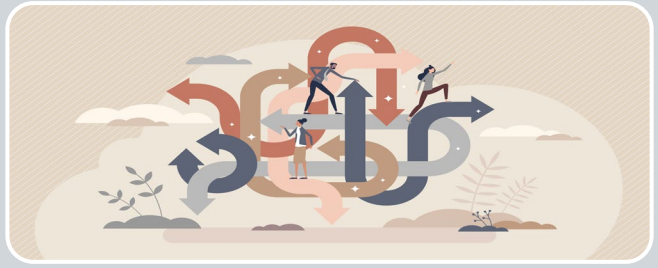
How would you encourage them to identify the right steps for completing the assessment task?

What advice could you give to your students to help them with creating realistic time estimations and deadlines that are appropriate for themselves?

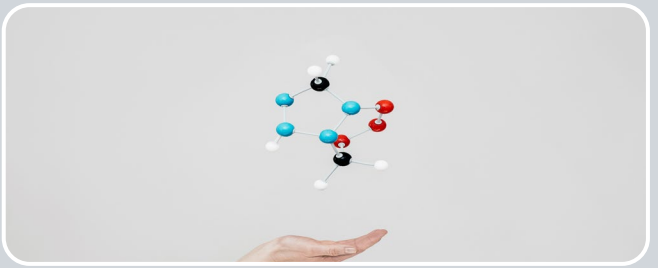
How can you ensure that individual differences and strengths are celebrated?

Applying the toolkit – discussion points

Can you identify the best **timing** within your course to introduce Step 2 to your students?



What would be the best **approach** for introducing Step 2?
Considerations: students' demographics, class size. scheme of work etc.
Suggestions: group work, individual reflection, in class or independent etc.)



How can you check that your students are on the right track without taking away from their uniqueness?

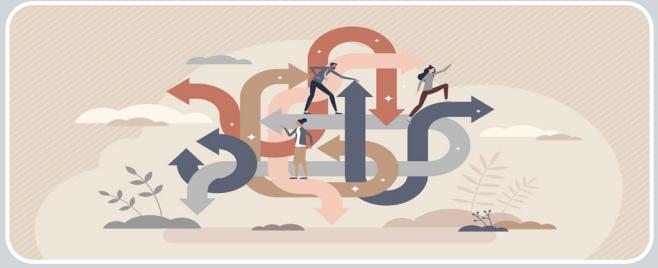
Reflecting on own practice (step 3)

Review the TET-toolkit template for students to consider step 3

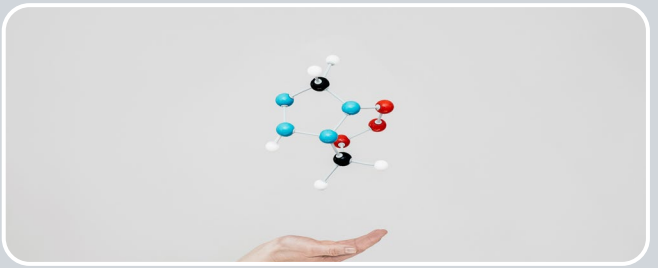
Consider the questions for maximising success. Are there any other questions that you could add?

Applying the toolkit – discussion points

Can you identify the best **timing** within your course to work through Step 3 with your students?



What would be the best **approach** for introducing Step 3? **Considerations**: students' demographics, class size. scheme of work etc. **Suggestions**: group work, individual reflection, in class or independent etc.)



How could you offer further support and feedback to your students to help them become independent learners?

Take it a step further

- Having considered the toolkit for students, combine all your ideas together to produce a completed scheme of work that embeds and integrates the toolkit with your course delivery plan.

Plenary

- What idea from today most changed or challenged your thinking about *time, effort, or assessment*?
- Which TET step feels most immediately **achievable** in your context?
- When you next introduce an assessment task, what will you do differently to support students' understanding of time and effort expectations?

Final notes

- ✓ There is **no single 'right' way** to implement the TET Toolkit
- ✓ Small, intentional adjustments can meaningfully improve students' understanding of assessment expectations
- ✓ The TET Toolkit is designed to support **dialogue, transparency, and alignment**, not additional workload

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Authors:
Christina Magkoufopoulou, Coventry University; Laurie Walden, University of the West of Scotland; Anna Law, University of the West of Scotland; Lucie Ingram, University of West London; Alice Lau, Aston University.

Resources

- Project Website and Toolkit website
- TET toolkit staff guidance
- TET toolkit template for staff
- TET toolkit student guidance
- TET toolkit template for students

References

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