

University of Cambridge (2020) and Rouse (2020) define reflective models as a step-by step guide or tool which could effectively support reflection. University of Cambridge (2020) explains all reflective models are different and the level of depth of reflection varies with every model. Take for example Graham Gibb's reflective cycle, University of Edinburgh (2020) and EPM (2019) explains Graham Gibb's reflective model is based on six steps including description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion and ending with an action plan. Early Years Careers (2015) states Graham Gibbs reflective cycle is a useful tool for practitioners to use which can support effective practice when reflecting on an activity or an experience. By writing down your thoughts and following the Gibb's cycle it can display your strengths, view weaknesses, and improve the quality of practice (Early Years Careers 2015). Webb (2016) and Husebo and Nestel (2015) reiterate this explaining Graham Gibb's six step reflective model can be an effective tool to help practitioners achieve effective practice by assisting new ideas, challenge assumptions, and combine observing to apply knowledge. Husebo and Nestel (2015) explains Gibb's reflective cycle can support effective practice, it can be used in debriefings as a tool to provide learners with answers, support reflection and to view a situation from a variety of different angles. Markkanenen et al. (2012) explains Gibb's reflective cycle could help support reflective practice within teaching and can be used to support any challenges which may occur within the classroom, such as lessons not running as expected (Markkanenen et al. 2012). EPM (2019) states Graham Gibb's reflective cycle is easy to use and provides practitioners with a guide which can be used to result in effective learning. Oviawe (2020) states Gibb's model can be used to result in effective practice, especially the description element of the cycle. A study taken which looked at student teachers using Gibb's cycle were able to describe better, which resulted in positive teaching practice (Oviawe, 2020). However, EPM (2019) argues Graham Gibbs cycle can be difficult for some people to use, because their feelings must be considered in part of the cycle. Some people find it difficult to open up and discuss their feelings which could restrict some practitioners using this model (EPM, 2018). Additionally, Gibb's cycle does not contain any deep questions therefore, it could be seen as superficial reflection (EPM, 2018). Middleton (2017) agrees and explains Gibb's model does not offer a clear structure or any critical approach when reflecting, explaining the model does not lead to change, or encourage reflecting in depth. Dallos and Stedmon (2009) and Venninen et al (2012) state reflecting in depth is important for children and practitioner's development. Reflecting in depth involves thinking deeply over your work, being self-aware and conscious of your own actions (Dallos and Stedmon, 2009). Brock (2014) discusses John Dewy (1859) who was an American psychologist believed it was important to reflect in depth, explaining for people to actively learn they must habitually reflect. Dewy believed we learn best when we reflect (Brock, 2014). If practitioners do not reflect in depth and reflect at a superficial level this cannot support children's or educator's development to the full potential (Venninen 2012).

Gibb's model includes quite a few areas which could take some time to complete, Clay and Weston (2018) explain lack of time of one of the barriers which some practitioners often come across when trying to reflect. Nine out of ten teachers say lack of time is stopping them from reflecting and learning more (Clay and Weston, 2018). Reynolds (2013) discusses a less time-consuming model is David Kolb's experimental theory. Reynolds (2013) explains David Kolb who is an American educational theorist designed his reflective model based on experimental learning. Reynolds (2013) and Kolb (1984) explain the model is based on a reusable idea which can be generally applicable in a variety of roles with broad applications. Kolb (2015) explains his experimental learning cycle model is a process where knowledge

can be created through having an experience. Aubrey and Riley (2019) and Rumson (2018) state the cycle includes four simple steps. First, concrete experience: this is the doing or having of the actual experience. Then secondly, reflective observation: reviewing and reflecting over your experience, thirdly, abstract conceptualisation: this is making a conclusion from your experience and lastly active experimentation: planning and trying out what you have learnt (Aubrey and Riley, 2019). Reynolds (2013) explains Kolb's model can be simplified even more by breaking it down into: Do, think, conclude and adapt (Reynolds, 2013). St Emlyn's (2021) and Early Education (2012) suggest Kolb's cycle is a useful guide for learners to develop their own reflection and supports effective practice. Houghton (2017) and Pacey (2016) echo this discussing the use of basic models, such as Kolb's can support effective practice in Early Years. Houghton (2017) states the importance of practitioners reviewing, adapting, and improving in a cycle process such as Kolb's can result in Early Years practice to consistently grow. Pacey (2016) explains reflection should be a continuous cycle of leaning, which provides practitioners to view their work from a balanced view, this suggests Kolb's reflective model could supports this. Rumson (2018) explains David Kolb's cycle should be used by teachers to gain effective practice and teachers are encouraged to use Kolb's cycle to engage students with the aim of them to learning systematically. Kolb and Kolb (2018) echo this explaining that the model was made to be adaptable, engage learners and supports effective practice. However, Kolb's cycle has been criticized as being too simple (Aubrey and Riley 2019). Kolb's cycle lacks any concrete evidence of pedagogical benefits, it does not consider any different cultural experience and fails to explore reflection with any depth (Aubrey and Riley, 2019). Nature's academy (2019) questions Kolb's cycle, explaining that Kolb explains you can start the cycle at any stage, however for the cycle to be effective the learner must complete all four stages, this could lead to confusion for practitioners using the model. Based on the evidence, it suggests reflective models can be effective resources to support reflective practice, however more research would support this further.

What IS reflective practice in Early Years?

Reflective practice is thinking over what you have done, what you are going to do and how you would do it again differently in the future (Pilcher 2020). Finlay (2008) and Siolta (2009) state reflective practice is a thinking process which considers the positives and negative of a situation or experience. Dallos and Stedan (2011) view on reflective practice is looking back over your practice and describes it as a physical metaphor as a mirror, to explain how you can view yourself. Connolly (2020) discusses Dewey (1933) describes reflective practice as a method which practitioners can use to become aware of their practice. By practitioners observing their own values and beliefs within the classroom, they learn about themselves and how to improve (Connolly, 2020). NCCA (2009) state reflective practice is a crucial way of thinking over one's work, which can be used every day. NCCA (2009) explains reflective practice requires practitioners to think about their work with adults and children in a subjective way, thorough methods such as observing, listening, and discussing with other colleagues.

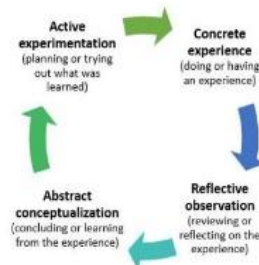
What are reflective models and how can they be used to support reflective practice?

Rouse (2020) and Reynolds (2013) explain reflective models are a structured guide or tool for practitioners to use to support their reflective practice. Reynolds (2013) states reflective models such as Kolb's Reflective Model can be used to support and simplify reflective thinking for practitioners.

(image: UCONN, 2020)

Kolb's reflective model, explained.

Svinicki and Dixon (1987) and Rumson (2018) state Kolb's cycle can be broken down into four simple steps. First, the learner begins the experience, the learner then reflects on the experience, draws a conclusion, and ends with a new direction or decision.



Rumson (2018) states Kolb believes his repetitive model which includes experiencing, thinking, reflecting, and acting results in effective learning. UCONN (2020) and University of Edinburgh (2020) believe Kolb's model of reflection can be broken down and simplified for any situation for practitioners to use effectively. Carley (2015) states Kolb's Reflective model can be used for Early Years practitioners by breaking it down to simply questions including:

- **Why do you think that happened?**
- **Why did it (or not) work this time?**
- **Do you think that will work again?**
- **What could I do next time?**

For more information on reflective models visit > cambridge-community.org.uk

What makes a practitioner a good reflector?

- Pilcher (2020) states for a practitioner to be an effective reflector, they must be willing to learn, adapt and be open-minded.
 - Colwell (2019) explains a reflective practitioner must seek evidence, listen to others, and not rely purely on their own experience.
 - Pacey (2016) explains to become a successful reflective practitioner you must be able to view your own practice in balanced way. Recognise your strengths, celebrate them and work on the areas that need to be improved.
- FOR MORE information visit: Pacey.org.uk

How could you become a reflective practitioner? (Carter et al. No date)

- Examine children's reactions to gain an understanding.
- Be curious about children's play and observe closely
- Document details of children's activities and conversations.
- Take time to study notes and photos to analyse what is significance.
- Ask children what their opinions on activities and stories are.
- Encourage change within the environment to develop new learning possibilities.

What is the AIM of reflective practice in Early Years?

Pilcher (2020) states the aim of reflective practice in Early Years is to support the individual needs of young children and the personal development of the practitioner. Matthew et al (2017) explains reflective practice is a vital element of a practitioner's professional development, claiming when practitioners carry out reflective practice, they gain an understanding of themselves, their teaching, and the children's needs. Matthew et al (2017) explains practitioners should use reflective practice to constantly view their own actions and experiences with the aim to improve their own personal development and benefit children's learning. Reflective practice in Early Years should be a constant cycle with the aim to gain constant improvements (Pacey,2016). Early Years practitioners should use reflective practice to challenge, develop and modify their work with the aim to improve (Pacey, 2016). Lindon and Trodd (2016) explain reflective practice should be used to avoid practitioners gaining contentment within practice and to ensure they adapt to new ways of teaching. Bleach (2014) and Paige and Craft (2011) explain the aim of reflective practice is for practitioners to gain new knowledge about their practice, learn from it and enhance their professional development. Paige and Craft (2011) discuss when practitioners use reflective practice, they consider the different ways in which children learn and develop therefore this supports not only the children's learning it supports the practitioner's personal development consistently. Richert (1990) states reflective practice is a tool for practitioners to think over their work, eliminate any areas for development and grow as a practitioner. One of the requirements in the Ofsted report (2019) states teachers should be seen to strive for continuously improvements by evaluating their work, therefore using reflective practice can support this. Welsh Government (2015) states part of the Early Years practitioner's role is to help individuals to learn at different levels and achieve positive outcomes, therefore the use of reflective practice supports this.

AN EXAMPLE OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Teaching English (2020) describes a scenario of reflective practice. A Teacher has just finished teaching a class, here are some of the reflective questions the teacher maybe thinking.

Did the children understand? If so how?

Did the lesson go well? – if so why?

Were all the children paying attention? - if not why?

What would be changed for next time? How?

TIP: Teaching English (2020) states the easiest way to reflect after a lesson is to make a note in a diary.

For more information visit > Teachinenglish.org

What are the benefits of reflective thinking for the children and involving them?

Reflecting and discussing with the children can be a useful tool to support reflective practice, Welsh Government (2012) states reflective practice can develop children's way of thinking to support children and teach them to reflect. Welsh Government (2012) emphasises by planning, doing, and reflecting with children, they can learn from different situations with the aim to improve from an early age. Pacey (2016) states when practitioners use reflective thinking children's needs can be met, it provides an interactive environment for them to learn and it builds on children's self-esteem. **TIP:** Ask the children what their thoughts are on a recent activity. (Hattie and Timperley, 2007) state by gathering feedback from children and peers can support professional practice, explaining a learner needs feedback to be able to reflect and learn.

What barriers are there and how can they be overcome?

Do you feel you don't have enough time to reflect?

Hayes et al (2014) states the process of reflection may seem long and detailed, however there is no need for it to be longer than a few minutes a day, by writing down your thoughts and opinions or taking time to think over can result in effective practice. Hayes et al (2014) explains some practitioners believe reflecting is a time-consuming task, therefore do not believe they can fit it into their day however, reflection can be completed quickly. Kennedy and Gujer (2012) states practitioners must be given the time to think, reflect and improve their practice and managers of settings should recognise the importance of providing the staff the time.

Do you feel uncomfortable with reflecting over your work?

Richert (1990) explains many new practitioners may feel overwhelmed, vulnerable, and hesitant to want to reflect over their practice. Richert (1990) states the importance of practitioners being able to feel supportive and comfortable to reflect on their work within the setting. Kennedy and Gujer (2012) discuss how it is important practitioners feel secure and confident to reflect on their work, individually and with other staff members. Kennedy and Gujer (2012) who manages an Australian day care setting, explains how her staff, through support and direction reflect daily over their work by using diaries and discussing their opinions with others. Kennedy and Gujer (2012) explains the importance of reflecting in the moment and with others and by reflecting it makes a real difference to the practitioners lives and the children.

For more information visit - [Youtube Link](#)

For more information on how to support your reflective practice view here - [Open.edu](#)

How can reflective practice help Early Years Practitioners?

"Reflective practice is a relatively simply- and very effective way of becoming a better teacher" (Taft. 2019)

Brock (2014) and Gray (2013) state when practitioners use reflective practice it enhances their academic performance. Brock (2019) explains reflective practice can support practitioners to develop and improve on their practice. Explaining by incorporating reflective practice into you day to day can build on existing skills, gain new knowledge, and provide clear understanding on how children learn (Brock, 2014). Gray (2013) states when practitioners use reflective practice it enriches their practice which can improve the quality of their teaching and their personal development. Continuous professional development is important for Early Years professionals to ensure a high standard of practice is demonstrated (Early Years Careers, 2016). Taft (2019) explains reflective practice supports practitioner's professional growth. If practitioners look for ways to improve lessons, make changes and want to improve, it can lead to better results for practitioners, the class and the school (Taft, 2019). Mizell (2010) states even if practitioners feel they have mastered a certain area, consistent development is crucial. For Practitioners to be as effective as they can, they must continually reflect, increase their knowledge, and expand of their skills to provide the best practice (Mizell, 2010).

What tools can you use to reflect? Teach Kloud (2019) recommends practitioners make notes of their reflective thoughts, either by using a diary or a recording device. When practitioners look back over their work, it provides them with a chance to view their work from a different perspective which provides them with the opportunity to improve techniques, improve future planning and build on their professional development (Teach Kloud 2019). Colwell (2019) explains by Early Years practitioners recording what is happening within a setting, this information can then be used to support decisions going forward for the children and their development.

Reflect with others Hanson and Appleby (2016) and Hallet (2013) explain reflecting with others could have a positive impact on practice and provision. Hallet (2013) discusses if practitioners listen to other practitioners' views, opinions, and values this could have a positive impact on their professional development and children's learning (Hallet,2013). Hanson and Appleby (2016) explain how at times reflective practice can be simply, plan, do and review, however, children's and adults' perspectives must be taken into consideration to support the development of learning.

For more information and idea on how you can reflect visit: - [Teachkloud.com](#)

You can reflect AT the time or AFTERWARDS!

Schon's Reflection in Action and on Action.

Schon (1984) describes reflection "IN" action as a way of experimenting and practicing new methods on the spot. Jones (2017) states there is a clear difference between reflection in action and reflection on action. Reflection in action is reacting, behaving, thinking, and feeling automatically. An example of this could be adapting an activity for Early Years, take for example an outdoor activity was planned, however it is raining. Therefore, as a practitioner makes changes to ensure the activity can still goes ahead. Jones (2017) explains reflection on action is thinking after the event. Thinking back about what you could have done differently, or what you would like to do in the future. Olteanu (2017) discusses reflection "ON" action takes place after an event has occurred and by looking back from a different perspective can be a helpful tool to support reflective practice. Buwert (2012) explains Schon defines reflection in action as reflecting as it happens unlike reflecting on action is thinking over the situation after it has happened.

Element 3 Reflective log

<i>Brief description of the activity (no more than 50 words)</i>
Activity for 3-4-year-old children in a nursery school setting. A group of 5 children and 1 practitioner. Christmas Wreaths. Using paper plates, different shapes, adhesive numbers, paint and pinecones.
<i>Aim/Objective of the activity</i>
The activity aim is inline with some of the requirements of the Welsh Government, Foundation Phase Framework (2015), including: encouraging children to use their creativity and imagination, support child-led play, solve problems, support number skills, include the concept of shapes, introduce different cultures, support children's motor skills.
<i>Your role</i>
To create, set up and hold activity which included maths, concept of shapes and Christmas. Explain what the activity involved, sit with the children, support children, however, ensure it was primarily a child-led activity. Observe and provide help if needed.
<i>Positive aspects – why? How could these be developed further?</i>
The Children enjoyed the activity because it provided them with a chance to be creative and discuss shapes, which they have been learning about recently. The children also enjoyed because it was based on Christmas, which sparked the discussion of an exciting topic. The activity provided me with the chance to view how children of different ages take to the activity. Some of the children enjoyed the concept of being able to choose what they wanted to decorate on their wreaths, especially the older children in the group. The painting was a success and provided a chance to support children's motor skills. The problem-solving element of the activity had a positive effect with the children and made them question why some items did not fit, this encouraged conversations within the group of "why" the shapes do not fit. This helped support children's concept of shapes. The activity was a fun activity to support maths.
<i>Challenging aspects – why? Link to your own practice.</i>
• The resources were one-sided which at times and did not provide as much flexibility as I wanted. • The 3-year olds in the groups did not fully understand at times, therefore I was repeating myself quite often.
<i>What knowledge did you demonstrate?</i>
I demonstrated that I was aware of the children's developmental needs, as I have worked with group of children before. This was the first time I had held this activity with any children, therefore I was demonstrating observational skills and viewing how each child took to the activity. I demonstrated how an activity can include maths and the concept of

shapes in a creative way. For example: asking “how many pinecones would we have if I took this one away”. I demonstrated the concept of shapes, by asking the children if they could find me a “circle”.

*What skills did **you** demonstrate?*

I demonstrated organisational skills by setting up this activity before the class started. Good timing skills by ensuring I had enough time to set this up correctly. I ensured all the area was safe to use, set up well with room for the children. Good communication skills with the teacher before the activity went ahead explaining the aims of the activity and why I had the idea for it to go ahead. Good communication skills with the children in the group, I listened carefully to all children and explained fully. Supporting the children, however I sat back at times and displayed observational skills. I demonstrated a professional manner throughout the activity. I demonstrated problem solving skills with the children by asking them questions such as, “Can anyone tell me why this shape won’t fit in this”. I demonstrated enthusiasm with the children, by using the words such as “well done” and reassured the children they could choose to design their wreath any way they wanted to. I demonstrated an understanding of the developmental needs of the children, by at times supporting them with areas, such as help with painting, gluing or peeling stickers.

*Which values did **you** demonstrate?*

I demonstrated inclusion with the children at all times, I ensured all children were involved. I supported the children throughout the activity, providing guidance by answering any questions. I listened to each child fully and ensured I answered in a consistent professional manner. For example, one of the children asked me “where will we put the wreaths” I listened and answered politely. Another example was when a child discussed how he has a new baby sister and chatted away about her in a loving way, to which I listened, smiled and showed respect and said thank-you for sharing with me. I displayed respect by providing the children with plenty of time to do the activity. I demonstrated respect by allowing the children to make choices, reassuring the children it was up to them what they would like to select and explained that there was no “right” or “wrong” way to do the activity. I used good manners when communicating with the children. I displayed consideration to the children and others, an example of this was at one point one of the children stopped and asked the questions “Who makes Santa’s presents?” at this point all of the children started to laugh and the child who asked, looked upset. I explained that this was a particularly good question, reassuring the child before answering and respecting all children. I displayed respect to ethics, when discussing with the children and that some children do not celebrate Christmas and they have different beliefs.

What could be done differently in future? Why?

What went well?

I believe I was positive, enthusiastic, happy, and professional throughout. I was clear, explained slowly and ensured the children I was there for support. I was organised therefore the children had everything they needed with plenty of time. I discussed the concept of shapes and maths which I believe supported the children’s learning. The activity was very well suited for the 4-year olds, who enjoyed the concept of choice.

What did I find a challenge?

The three-year olds in the group needed more support, at times I was repeating myself to ensure they understood. I found the resources quite one-sided, such as the adhesive

numbers, therefore lacked enthusiasm at times which resulted in more of a task rather than play for the children.

What would I change in the future?

- Next time, I will plan to collect sticks, leaves and stones from the school yard prior to the activity. This will provide more creativity. Take for example a leaf. A leaf can be printed, cut out and the veins on the leaf can be counted, unlike an adhesive sticker, which provides less variety.
- Next time, I will ensure that I provided the younger children will less choice, this should lead to the children gaining a better understanding, which would result in the children having to ask less questions and more time enjoy the activity.

Element 4 Personal Development Plan

Area for further development (provide further details)	Why?	How?	Who/Where?	When?
Gain volunteer experience or a placement with a Play Therapist.	Spend time with the Play Therapist and gather more information on what the role involves. By shadowing a Play Therapist, I am hoping to enhance my professional development and decide if it is an area, I would like to do a masters in.	Contact Play Therapists in my area and ask if volunteering or a placement is possible.	Play Therapy. The Rainbow Tree. Wales. Swansea. Contact: ann.greenwood@therainbowtreewales.co.uk Clare Rees Therapy. Carmarthenshire. Contact: info@crplaytherapy.co.uk Kirsy Bilski. Counselling. Contact: 07971 264 251. Cheka Safeguarding services. Contact: info@chekasafeguarding.co.uk Play Therapy.org. Contact: ptcontact@ptuk.org.com	January 2021.
Research if Swansea University offer a Play Therapy Masters course.	It is important I find out if a masters in Play Therapy is available within my area. If I had to travel, this would be a factor to consider. Ask if Swansea has a post graduate open day coming up online, to find out more information on what the masters	Contact Swansea University. Contact University of South Wales.	Swansea University: Post Graduate Courses. Contact: https://www.swansea.ac.uk/postgraduate/ University of South Wales: Post Graduate Courses. https://www.southwales.ac.uk/courses/msc-play-therapy/	December 2020.

	involves and if it seems suitable for myself and my personal development.		Direct Contact for the MSc Play Therapy: Clare.carbis@southwales.ac.uk .	
Gather more experience in a Primary School.	Although, I have volunteered 300 hours in a primary school, prior to starting my degree. I have decided I would like to gain more experience within a primary school to help me make the decision whether I would like to study a PGCE after I graduate. This would provide me with the opportunity to ask questions to teachers, be in an early years setting and support children again.	Contact primary schools in my area and ask if volunteering is an option for me.	Contact: Penyrheol Primary School. penyrheol.primary@swansea-edunet.gov.uk Head Teacher: Alison Davies. Contact: Treuchaf Primary. treuchaf.primaryschool@swansea-edunet.gov.uk Contact: Jason Dodd. Gorseinion Primary School. Gorseinion.primary@swansea-edunet.gov.uk	December 2021.
Resit my Maths & Science GCSE.	After more experience within a primary school, I would like to apply to get onto the PGCE. To meet the requirements, I must resit my Maths and Science GCSE to be accepted onto the PGCE. More information is required, to find out the times/days of the classes and costing of these courses.	Contact Gower College or ask University.	Gower College Maths Online jonathan.oakes@gcs.ac.uk Gower College Biology GCSE Online. https://www.gcs.ac.uk/part-time-course/gcse-biology-gcse Gower College Chemistry GCSE Online. https://www.gcs.ac.uk/part-time-course/gcse-chemistry-gcse	March 2021.

Contact Career's officer at University.	Contact Mark Thomas- the university Career officer. Ask him if this plan is sensible or if he can suggest any other methods/ routes which may be helpful to support my decision.	Contact the Career officer at Trinity St David University.	Mark Thomas Tel: 01267-676829 E-mail: mark.thomas@uwtsd.ac.uk	December 2021.
Research Available Funding for Masters.	More information on what grants or loans may be available to me if I decide to commit to a Masters.	Contact Student Finance Wales.	Website: Student Finance Wales. Post Graduate Loans. https://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/postgraduate-students/postgraduate-master-s-finance/who-can-get-it.aspx	January 2021.
Research what jobs are in demand in my area.	The reason for this is to help provide support to my discussion. I am staying in Wales and need to focus on a career which is accessible and in demand here.	Research jobs within my area to view job roles and demand in area, local council jobs.	Website: Early Years Wales. https://www.earlyyears.wales/en/childcare-jobs E Teach. https://www.eteach.com/jobs/early-years/wales/?oo=ts-lf3 Teaching Personnel. https://www.teachingpersonnel.com/jobs/early-years-teacher/wales/	March 2021.
Volunteer within the community.	I would like to build my communication and engagement skills with children and young families. When university finishes in the Summer, I will have more time to volunteer. I have experience with children in schools, however by volunteering	Contact local councillors. Contact volunteer organisations	Penyrheol Local Councillor. Mr Andrew Stevens. Contact: cllr.andrew.stevens@swansea.gov.uk Gorseinion Local Councillor. Contact: cllr.kelly.roberts@swansea.gov.uk	June 2021.

	within the community I could build on my communication skills with a variety of children.	within my area.	SCVS https://www.scvs.org.uk/volunteercentre	
Learn Welsh.	Although I learnt Welsh at school, I have low confidence with the pronunciation of Welsh. I would like to start doing a beginners Welsh Course to support children within a school or nursery setting. The course is £45.	Contact: Learn Welsh.	Enrol here: Learn Welsh. https://learnwelsh.cymru/	Starting Jan 25 th 2021.

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