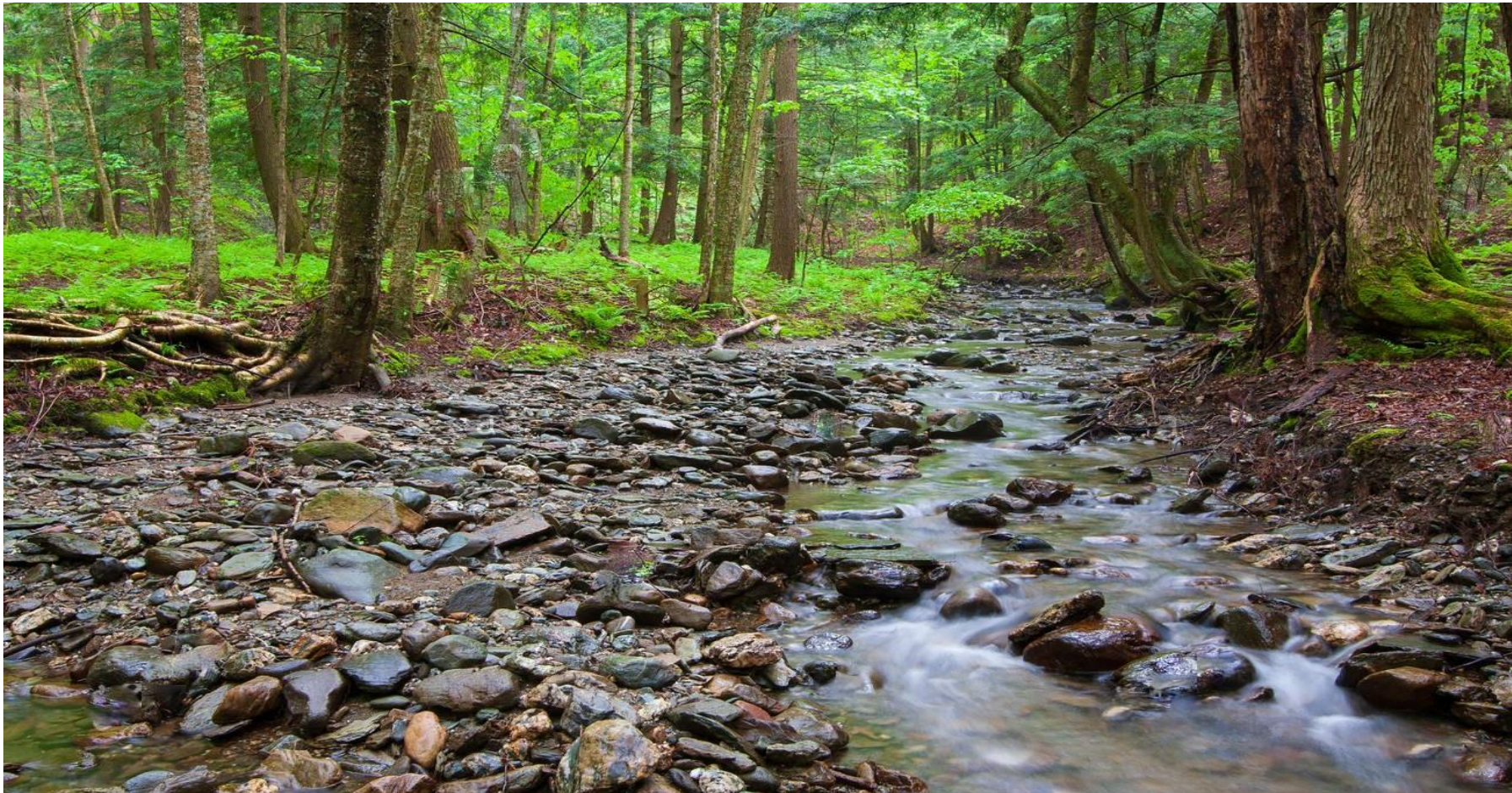


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Section 1



(Source: Alamy, 2007)

Section 2 - Feature 1 – The Trees

Learning opportunities - measuring the circumference of the tree trunks, measuring the distance between trees, standard measuring using measuring equipment and non-standard measuring using trees, sticks, twigs or rocks. Counting, colours, textures, patterns, sequence. Using natural loose parts to create shapes, measure big/small, heavy/light. Identifying what grows on trees, identifying different types of leaves and trees, life cycle of trees, exploring the bark, what lives there, exploring different tree trunks and the similarities or differences between their bark/ leaves/ trunks.

The trees and the area surrounding them offer an abundance of mathematical and scientific learning opportunities. The large scaled area provides children with opportunities to see and explore different shapes and patterns in the natural environment and in their natural state. Children could use the I pad to record and capture the different shapes and patterns they find and count how many of each shape whilst being encouraged to talk about the difference and similarities of those shapes. Providing children with containers to collect natural loose parts and make their own natural shapes or creating an art piece using different shapes would link to progression step 1 of the Curriculum for Wales (2022) 'I have explored, compared, and used the general language of shapes through investigative play'. To extend the activity children could be provided with string or encouraged to use mud/clay to fix shapes together in order to make 3d shapes (Delve and Mills, no date). Utilising the readily available natural loose parts to create shapes and creative pieces effectively provokes interest within the child and encourages them to explore and investigate their environment with care and attention. Children will be able to observe the different loose parts available during different weather conditions and seasons whilst enabling children to make connections with the world around them (Ranheim, 2020).



(Source: Bing, no date).



(Source: Bing, no date).

(Source: Bing, no date).



Feature 2 – The rocks and pebbles

Learning opportunities - measuring, size, weight, colour, counting, data handling, Balancing, shape. Identifying what lives under the rocks and pebbles, life cycles, cardinal and ordinal numbers.

The rocks and pebbles area of the image offer children numerous opportunities to participate in natural loose parts play in a range of unique shapes, sizes and weight. Allowing children the freedom to explore this type of area and the natural materials present could offer children opportunities to express mathematical language and investigate mathematical concepts naturally, such as, exploring big rocks, finding smaller rocks, this rock is heavy, this rock looks lighter and so on. This would link to progression step 1 of the Curriculum for Wales (2022) 'I can make estimates and comparisons with measures, such as 'shorter than', 'heavier than'. To extend the activity adults could encourage children to classify and sort natural loose parts into categories such as, big and small or heavy and light, encouraging children to discuss the reasons they have categorised them in each set. This would aid in facilitating an additional progression step 'I can group sets into categories and I am beginning to communicate the rules I have used'.

In addition to this activity writing numbers on the pebbles for children to discover and order would enhance children's cardinal number skills. Encouraging children to explore the environment and collect items of the respective quantity not only solidifies cardinal number skills but, provokes children's curiosity and interests in order to retain their focus of the task in hand. This activity would link to progression step 1 'I have experienced and explored numbers, including cardinal, ordinal and nominal numbers, in number-rich indoor and outdoor environments', alongside 'I can notice, recognise and write numbers in a range of media, through a multisensory approach, from 0 to 10 and beyond' (Curriculum for Wales , 2022).



(Source: Glenwood Family Centre, 2021)



(Source: Burgh, no date)

Feature 3 – The Stream

Learning opportunities - capacity, volume, measuring depth of the stream, floating and sinking, timing objects travelling down the stream between two fixed points, temperature, forces, cause and effect, identifying what lives in the stream and investigating their natural habitat, life cycles.

The stream featured in the image can offer children the opportunity to explore water in its natural form. The flowing water itself provides children with the opportunity to observe water and how it moves in a multitude of ways. The gently flowing water running through the image can be seen to run over rocks and pebbles giving the children the opportunity to study the waters behaviour, and explore forces within the waters flow. The children would have the opportunity to investigate what happens when the water hits objects or surfaces giving an effective way to observe and take part in cause and effect. For example, in the shallower parts of the stream, children could collect rocks, pebbles and logs creating a dam or wall to see what happens when the water hits the newly placed loose parts, working collaboratively and participating in discussions such as, where does the water go? Can they make the water change direction? (White, 2014). By predicting and investigating how their actions have an effect on how the water behaves links to progression steps 2 and 3 of Curriculum for Wales (2022), 'I can use my knowledge and understanding to predict effects as part of scientific exploration', and 'I can use a variety of simple models to describe the forces acting on an object'.

The stream can also offer children the opportunity to discover and develop their understanding of living things. By providing the children with nets, clear containers, tea strainers and magnifying glasses they can carefully pond dip to discover any living things residing in the stream and observe them in their identification containers. After observing and identifying creatures children can be shown how to safely return them back to their natural habitat. Children can access books or the internet to identify what they have found and explore relationships between living things, their habitats and their life cycles for example , a frog (Curriculum for Wales,

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2022). Incorporating ICT is a useful way of recording what they find, creating databases and comparing what they have found during different seasons of the year and can be linked to progression step 1 of the mathematics and numeracy in the Curriculum of wales (2022), 'I can investigate, collect and record data found in my environment'. (Grigg and Lewis, 2016).



(Source: Bing, no date)



(Source: Bing, no date)

In addition to the activities and learning opportunities identified and discussed within this section, an environment such as the image shown offers a wide range of holistic and cross curricular opportunities for learning, such as, expressive arts, language literacy and communication, health and wellbeing and humanities.

RISK BENEFIT ASSESSMENT

Location / Activity:	Woodland	Date:	26 th September 2021
Assessor:	Claire Wellington	Review date:	26 th September 2022

ACTIVITY	How will young people BENEFIT from this activity?	Possible hazards	Who is at risk?	PRECAUTIONS in place to reduce the risk of injury	Overall risk RATING: L/M/H
Exploring the environment	Children will enhance their curiosity and investigate different areas of the outdoor environment. Children will involve themselves in risky play, problem solve and explore in a multisensory way. Children will be able to assess hazard and risks for themselves and act to reduce the risks to themselves and others. Children will have opportunities to participate in collaborative working and problem solving. Children will have the opportunity to discover, explore, and investigate natural loose parts in this high affordance outdoor space.	Risk of injury due to a trip or fall. Children may wander off or go too far away from an adult and get lost. Children may put objects or loose parts in their mouths.	Children and adults	Discussing boundaries and golden rules of where we can and cannot explore with the children. Ensuring an appropriate adult: child ratio. Discuss and demonstrate appropriate ways of exploring objects in a safe but sensory way.	L

ACTIVITY	How will young people BENEFIT from this activity?	Possible hazards	Who is at risk?	PRECAUTIONS in place to reduce the risk of injury	Overall risk RATING: L/M/H
Investigating and exploring around the stream and exploring in the stream	Children will engage in a sensory experience and have the opportunity to observe and record temperatures, measure depth, investigate capacity and volume, explore floating and sinking, investigate life cycles and explore the flow of the stream. Children will experience the force of the water whilst standing in or walking through and enhance their balance, gross motor skills and vestibular movement development. Children will have the opportunities to make observations, predictions and experience cause and effect first hand. Children will have opportunities to explore and make discoveries in and around the stream offering mathematical and scientific fluency, developing fine motor skills in the process by picking up smaller objects. Water play allows for problem solving, decision making and develops hand eye coordination.	Children or adults could slip and fall into the water causing injury or drowning.	Children and adults	Discuss the importance of safety around the water with the children, demonstrate and encourage them to use sticks to measure the depth of the stream. Ensure appropriate footwear and clothing is worn at all times.	L

ACTIVITY	How will young people BENEFIT from this activity?	Possible hazards	Who is at risk?	PRECAUTIONS in place to reduce the risk of injury	Overall risk RATING: L/M/H
Investigating during different weather conditions	Children will experience how their bodies react to changes in weather/seasons in a multisensory way and identify how it feels to be hot, cold etc. Children will have the opportunity to build up resilience to adverse weather conditions. Children will build upon decision making skills by identifying appropriate clothing and work on their independence skills to facilitate this. Children will have the opportunity to make observations and compare weather conditions and seasons using data to record their findings. Children will be able to identify concepts such as temperature and begin to use thermometers.	Participants may get cold, get sun burn, sun stroke, hypothermic if wet and cold and hypothermia. Participants may encounter low hanging branches or disturbed areas from stormy weather.	Children and adults	Appropriate clothing for example waterproofs, wellington boots, layers of warm clothing, sun hats, sun cream and plenty of fluids. Check weather forecast for any severe weather warnings. Check the area with the children to identify any new hazards.	L

ACTIVITY	How will young people BENEFIT from this activity?	Possible hazards	Who is at risk?	PRECAUTIONS in place to reduce the risk of injury	Overall risk RATING: L/M/H
Walking on uneven or slippery ground	Children will be able to enhance their gross motor skills, balance and physical coordination. Children will be able to explore and investigate different gradients and textures under their feet in a multisensory way, becoming more aware and more resistant to a change in their environment. Children will develop their sense of movement including vestibular and Proprioception. Children will gain a sense of autonomy and enhance their decision-making skills as they would need to wear the right footwear in order to be more stable when walking on uneven or slippery ground.	Slips, trips , falls.		Demonstrate safety around the different gradients and uneven or slippery ground. Encourage children to assess the risk to themselves when walking around and ensure appropriate footwear is worn.	L

ACTIVITY	How will young people BENEFIT from this activity?	Possible hazards	Who is at risk?	PRECAUTIONS in place to reduce the risk of injury	Overall risk RATING: L/M/H
Collecting/moving objects and investigating minibeasts/plant life	Children will have the opportunity to identify different living things and explore their habitats, to explore life cycles and observe living things in their natural environment. Children will be able to gain experience on knowledge as to how their actions contribute to the health and safety of other living things, helping them become more ethical citizens. Children will be able to see and explore numerous colours, textures and patterns within the environment. Children will be able to Sort and group objects to a certain criterion, for example objects by size, shape, weight colour. Children will enhance their gross and fine motor skills in order to move/ collect objects. Collaborative working in groups.	Children may move or collect an inappropriate or dangerous object. Children may get bitten, stung or have an allergic reaction to something they have touched.		Ensure all medical records are up to date for children and adults and appropriate medical plan is in place, ensure any medication is present with the child with staff trained and confident to use it. Discuss with children what appropriate objects can be picked up /collected/moved in order to keep themselves and the minibeasts safe.	L

The outdoors and its benefits on a child's learning and development has been a topic for discussion over an extensive period of time. White (no date) suggests that the outdoor environment is of such valuable importance to a child's development that it should not be seen as optional or just a play time alongside indoor provision, but as a necessity to work in partnership with indoor provision to facilitate children's holistic learning and development. Bilton (2010) agrees and suggests that the success of learning in an outdoor environment relies heavily on the practitioners, she believes that outdoor learning can only be successfully implemented when it is seen as an invaluable companion to indoor learning. The Reggio Emilia approach agrees, and believes the importance of the environment in which children are exposed to is a fundamental part of their development and describes the environment as the third teacher. The approach sees children as curious who are influenced by their surroundings and encourages freedom for children to utilise the environment to play an active role and direct their learning and development (Thornton and Brunton, 2010). According to Tovey, (no date) Froebel agrees and also sees children as curious, active and self-directed learners who thrive when immersed in experiences involving nature and the real world, however, Froebel states that freedom is not an opportunity for children to engage in self activity alone but an opportunity for practitioners to encourage and become learning partners to facilitate and support children to become more self-aware, make connections and extend their learning in a way tailored to suit their needs at their rate and sequence of learning. A learning environment such as the image shown in section 1 offers children the experiences of nature and the real world and the freedom to explore and investigate, in addition to this comes opportunities for practitioners to engage in sustained shared thinking with the child. According to Siraj-Blatchford (2009) effective sustained shared thinking between the practitioner and the child is an important part of pedagogy. She believes that engaging in sustained shared thinking with a practitioner who shows genuine interest and positivity to the collaborative learning encourages and facilitates children to work out new concepts and build upon previous skills in a curious and investigative way. Sustained shared thinking also allows children to develop skills like critical thinking and problem solving in a collaborative way with a shared interest between learner and practitioner. The image shown has

opportunities to facilitate sustained shared thinking, for example feature 3 allows for opportunities for open ended questions such as 'I wonder what may happen if I put another rock here?', or 'What kind of living things might we find in the stream or under these rocks?' In addition to sustained shared thinking metacognitive talk is also thought to be a fundamental part of the practitioner's role to facilitate children's learning. According to Smith and Mancy (2017) there is a clear link between effective metacognitive talk and positive mathematical outcomes. They suggest that when working collaboratively and thinking out loud children can regulate and process their own cognitive abilities whilst also understanding and exploring the cognitive process of others, offering opportunities to problem solve and understand mathematical concepts. Similarly, Cremin *et al* (2015) suggests the importance of dialogue and collaborative learning. They believe that this effectively promotes a range of skills including, sharing and developing their thinking and ideas, consolidating new ideas, developing verbal reasoning skills and encouraging children to listen to their peers or practitioners view and ideas in order to increase their awareness. The features shown in the image offer a range of contexts in which dialogue and metacognitive talk can take place, for example, in feature 3 when participating in the activity with the children of building a dam the practitioner would be thinking out loud for instance, 'I am going to put this log here because that will change the direction of the water, oh that doesn't work I wonder what else I can use? At this point during a collaborative dialogue, children should start to offer ideas and opinions to help solve the problem. However, Kramer and Rabe-Kleberg (2011, cited in Cremin *et al*, 2015) disagree. They believe that children undertaking a problem-solving scenario without the involvement of a practitioner often inspire them to be more creative, effectively increasing their understanding of concepts and processes.

The environment in which practitioners expose children to is known to have an impact on their learning and development. The environment as shown in the image provided in section 1 is an intriguing environment with unlimited access to a range of natural, unique loose parts. Exposure to natural loose parts, according to NSPA (no date) Simon Nickelson developed his theory of loose parts and the benefits of it in 1972, he believed that materials that can be portable, redesigned, fiddled with and combined provoke curiosity and interest in children and create opportunities for imagination and creativity. The unique nature of natural loose parts as

featured in the image in section 1 have unique patterns, sequences, colours and shapes that cannot be manufactured. Children who are exposed to natural loose parts are able to experience first hand experiences like temperature, smell, taste, weight and texture opening up endless opportunities for discovery and investigation. NPSA (no date) also states that loose parts play has been observed to encourage children to problem solve and hypothesis lending itself to a more focused learning attainment and the participation of sustained shared thinking. Similarly, Flannigan and Dietze (2018) agree that loose parts play offers children a holistic way of learning. They believe that loose parts have no instructions which allows the child to explore and discover with the freedom to determine the direction of these open-ended resources in a way that is developmentally appropriate for them. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (no date, cited in Conkbayir and Pascal, 2014) believed that children should be encouraged to discover knowledge, understanding and facts for themselves, with the addition of loose parts children are being offered the opportunity to discover and make sense of their world in a curious and investigative way. He believed that the adult's role in the facilitation of learning is to carefully observe and identify children's unique interests and needs. In relation to loose parts, although children have access to an abundance of natural loose parts in the image, if the practitioner was to observe children taking an interest in pouring or filling loose parts they may add additional synthetic loose parts for example, containers, buckets, funnels or bottles to extend and facilitate their learning. Similarly, if children were observed taking an interest in constructing and building with loose parts, practitioners may add string, clay, glue tape or cutting tools in order to extend the narrative.

In addition to the numerous benefits and holistic development that loose parts play and a continuously changing environment can provide it brings with it an opportunity to create affordances for children. According to Maynard and Waters (2014) an effective outdoor environment offers children the opportunity to interact with their surroundings in their own unique way within what they perceive the environment can offer them within their capabilities. Flannigan and Dietze (2018) agree, they suggest that providing an enriched loose parts and high affordance to children creates opportunities for rich, varied and memorable learning through play experiences. An environment which is rich in provision of a multitude of variables in regard to loose parts and affordance opportunities

is shown in the image in section 1. This environment consists of continuous changing environments and variables to facilitate their individual learning patterns and is rich in opportunity for the child to interact with the environment. However, the success and facilitation of the affordance an environment lends itself to a child lies with the adult. According to Maynard and waters (2014) if a child perceives a muddy banking as a mountain that needs to be climbed but the practitioner has imposed a no playing on the banking rule then they are essentially deprived of that particular affordance in that moment in time, sufficiently limiting the opportunities for the child to be curious, develop skills and gain autonomy.

Similarly, Bilton (2010) agrees, she suggests that the successful facilitation of outdoor learning weighing heavily on practitioners views and practice. She believes that if outdoor learning is seen as a break for practitioners and children instead of the invaluable environment that offers endless opportunities then it will never be a facilitator to children's learning and development. She suggests that in order for children to appreciate their environment and immerse themselves in the opportunities it offers the adults around them need to show a keen interest around them. White (no date) agrees, and states that children should be accompanied by practitioners who enjoy being outdoors with them in an outdoor learning environment with positive attitudes and appreciation for the numerous holistic opportunities for learning and development. Banduras social learning theory supports this, he believed that children are influenced by the attitudes, behaviours and reactions of the people around them and suggests that children proceed to imitate these behaviours in the future. Therefore, if children are exposed to a practitioner who has a negative attitude towards outdoor learning and the benefits it offers then the child may exhibit the same negative attitudes also (Nabavi, 2012). Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory also supports the importance of knowledgeable and positive adults in the child's microsystem, he believed that the influence of the adults around them can have an immediate long lasting effect on their views and ideas in the future (Conkbayir and Pascal, 2014).

Alongside the importance of positive attitudes views and a shared interest between practitioner and child, successful facilitation of learning in the outdoor environment is the practitioner's ability to be patient and observe. The Montessori approach places the child at the heart of the approach to learning and involves practitioners creating sufficient learning environments in which adults can be led

by the child. The approach promotes the idea that in a well planned environment, children are capable of teaching themselves by investigating activities that interest them. The Montessori approach facilitates children's learning and development by observing and gaining extensive knowledge of children's interests. Montessori believed that in order to gain this insight into children's development and observe children effectively children should be free to express themselves in an environment that allows practitioners to observe skills and capabilities to unfold naturally. As a result of these observations practitioners would plan and provide access and resources that encompass the curriculum in order to extend their learning and development (Issacs, 2018). However, the Foundation Phase Framework published by the Welsh Government (2015) suggests that practitioners should find a balanced approach to learning between child-led activities and practitioner led. The framework is designed to offer children play based, first hand experiences in both the indoor and outdoor environments. The framework emphasises the importance of identifying, through observations where children currently stand in their learning journey and how they are using their environment alongside their current interests in order for practitioners to plan for extending their learning. The welsh Government also puts emphasis on the vital importance of interactions between the practitioner and child involving sustained shared thinking and open – ended questioning.

Although the importance of sustained shared thinking, metacognitive talk and exploring the environment alongside children with a positive attitude and genuine interest are of significant importance, Vygotsky's theory suggests that practitioners need to be aware of critical points to enter or interrupt play activities with children. Vygotsky believed that practitioners should wait for a cue or invitation from children to ensure they enter at the zone of proximal development in order to support and facilitate the child's learning and development. Vygotsky believes practitioners should wait for these cues in order to know when to successfully deliver scaffolding in order to support children with their next stage of development (Conkbayir and pascal, 2014).

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