

# High School YEARS

Working Together for Lifelong Success



## Short Clips

### Motivate with magazines

Looking for a surefire way to boost your high schooler's enthusiasm for reading? He could look for magazines that match his interests, such as animation, soccer, cooking, sports cars, or music. Consider getting him a subscription, or he might borrow magazines from the library or read them online.

### Earning trust

If you discover that your teen told you a "white lie," try this idea to show her how important it is to tell the truth. Ask her to name a friend she can always trust. Why does she feel that way? Point out that trust is earned—and even a tiny lie can make you question whether she might tell bigger ones.

### DID YOU KNOW?

The cost of taking the SAT or ACT doesn't have to stand in your child's way of going to college. Both test makers are increasingly partnering with states and school districts to offer these tests for free to students in need. Have your teenager contact his school counselor to see if he qualifies for a fee waiver, or offer to find out for him.

### Worth quoting

"Patience attracts happiness; it brings near that which is far." *Swahili proverb*

### Just for fun

**Q:** What is a snowman's favorite cereal?

**A:** Snow Flakes.



## Usher in a fresh start

January is the perfect time to reevaluate school habits. Encourage your teen to draw up resolutions that will help her succeed in 2018—and beyond. Share these suggestions.

**Resolution:** Do my best work.

**How to keep it:** Write down steps to take, and post them by your desk. For example, "I will review all my work carefully to verify facts, double-check math answers, and proofread for spelling and punctuation." When you hear yourself thinking, "I'm sure it's fine. I don't need to look at it again," read the statement out loud.

**Resolution:** Take careful notes.

**How to keep it:** When taking notes in class, write neatly and leave plenty of room to add details and answer questions later. Look over your notes every day to cement the information in your mind.

**Resolution:** Back up computer work.

**How to keep it:** Computers crash, and networks sometimes go down. When



working on the computer, hit "save" every few paragraphs, and regularly copy your files onto a flash drive or back them up in the cloud.

**Resolution:** Stay on top of my schedule.

**How to keep it:** Maintain a calendar that includes school assignments, job shifts, and social events. Seeing a day, week, and month at a glance will help you manage your time better. Plan study time and extracurricular obligations first, then work your social life around them. 👍

## A supportive home environment

When your teenager was younger, he probably couldn't wait to tell you what happened in school. Although that may have changed, your interest and involvement in his education are still important. Consider these ideas.

■ **Create a check-in time.** During the morning commute to school or at dinner, chat about his classes and after-school activities. Get him talking with an open-ended question, such as "What made you laugh today?"

■ **Attend school events.** Show your high schooler that curriculum nights, parent information programs, or college fairs are as vital as any family appointment. Hang school notices on a bulletin board or the refrigerator as reminders. 👍



# Q & A The opioid epidemic and teenagers

You may have heard news reports about the opioid epidemic and wondered whether it could affect your teenager. Here are answers to questions about opioids, which include heroin and prescription pain relievers like OxyContin, Vicodin, and codeine.

**Q:** How can I talk to my teen about opioids?

**A:** Explain the dangers, including the serious consequences like addiction and even fatal overdose. When you hear sobering statistics in the news, such as the number of overdoses in your state, share them with your high schooler.



**Q:** What if a doctor prescribes an opioid for one of us?

**A:** Keep all medications locked up between doses. Also, promptly dispose of any leftovers. That will keep them away from teens who are tempted to explore medicine cabinets or face peer pressure from friends to do so.

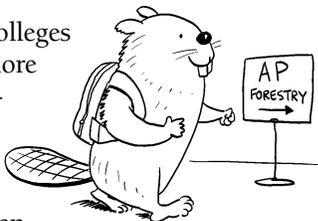
**Q:** What are the signs of opioid use, and what should I do if I think my child has tried these drugs?

**A:** Signs of opioid use include shifts in relationships with family and friends, not caring about one's appearance, changes in sleep habits, and poor concentration. If you suspect or discover your teen is using drugs, contact his pediatrician immediately. 🙌

## Thoughtful course planning

Four years of math? Or three, with a computer course senior year? Whether your teen goes to college or directly to work after high school graduation, course selection matters.

■ Some colleges require more math, science, or foreign language classes than



your child needs to graduate from high school. Suggest that she check websites for the requirements at schools she may be interested in.

■ Honors and Advanced Placement classes show readiness for college. Also, encourage your teenager to choose interesting, higher-level electives like environmental science or psychology.

■ Vocational courses teach skills that meet employers' needs. The school career center can help your teen identify interests and pick classes. 🙌

## How to increase confidence

Feeling confident can pave the way for your high schooler's future success, both in and out of the classroom. Try these tips to boost her self-esteem.

**Stay upbeat.** Encourage your teen with positive statements like "I know you'll rock your presentation today!" Also, share what gives you confidence. "I was a little nervous about my presentation at work, but I felt good because I had backed up my points with solid information."



**Give her responsibility.** Put your teenager in charge of home projects like replacing a water filter or a printer cartridge. Accomplishing tasks successfully, and seeing family members benefit from her efforts, will boost her confidence.

**Focus on what your teen can do.** Shine the spotlight on what your child is good at. Say she has a knack for explaining complicated ideas in simple language. Ask her to help her younger brother with his fractions homework or to teach the whole family how to play a challenging board game. 🙌

## Parent to Parent Learning a language—together

My son Parker is taking German this year. I took it in high school, too, but I don't remember much. I thought I could motivate Parker by learning some words and phrases alongside him.

I've been encouraging him to text me in German occasionally, and I use a German-English dictionary to

reply to him. Before we went to the grocery store together, I asked him to translate the list into German, and we had fun using it to shop.

Finally, I suggested that we download one of his favorite childhood movies in German. Since Parker remembered much of the story, this was a great way for both of us to pick up new vocabulary. 🙌



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### Listen up!

Listening is an important part of a high school student's day in class. Encourage your teen to be an attentive listener by remembering the acronym SOLER. She should Squarely face the teacher, Open her posture by uncrossing her arms, Lean in a bit to show interest, make Eye contact, and Relax.

### Promote problem solving

As your child approaches adulthood, you might think of yourself as a "consultant." Instead of telling him what to do, pose questions to help him problem solve for himself. For instance, rather than saying, "You should start your project now," you could ask, "How can you schedule your time to finish your project by Friday?"

### Be a parent volunteer

Reach out to your teenager's school to find out how you can volunteer. They may need parents to speak at a career night, chaperone a dance, or serve on a parent committee. Let your high schooler know about your involvement—she'll see that her school is important to you.

### Worth quoting

"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams."  
Eleanor Roosevelt

### Just for fun

**Q:** What's the worst thing that can happen to a geography teacher?

**A:** Getting lost.



## Respect for others, respect for yourself

What does it mean to be respectful? Talk with your high schooler about these key building blocks of respect.

### Respectful language

Kind, thoughtful words convey respect. Sometimes your teen might make a comment that sounds disrespectful ("Why would you do that?"), even if that wasn't his intention. Or he may lace otherwise kind words with sarcasm ("Nice going, Jim"). Let him know that he should think about both what he says and how he says it. He might not realize how his choice of words and his tone affect others.

### Behaving respectfully

The saying "Actions speak louder than words" is true when it comes to respect. Your teenager can show respect in many ways: by using good manners, giving off positive vibes with his body language (smiling, nodding), and obeying rules.



**Idea:** Your actions count, too. Model respect in front of your child every day (treating cashiers with respect for the job they're doing, for example).

### Self-respect

If your teen respects himself, he's likely to make better choices. That's why it's important that he set boundaries, stick to his values, and practice positive self-talk. **Idea:** Suggest that he treat himself the way he'd like his friends to treat him. He'd feel hurt if a friend called him a loser, so he shouldn't think or talk that way about himself. 👍

## Motivated to write nonfiction

Much of the writing your teenager does in her classes is nonfiction. Suggest these real-life activities for extra practice.

■ **Op-ed pieces.** Is your teen passionate about solving the homeless problem or ending bullying? She might pen a letter to the editor of the town or school newspaper with suggestions for how to help.

■ **Grant proposals.** Your high schooler could get funding for a group she's involved in or for a community organization she cares about. Encourage her to talk to her school counselor or see [ysa.org/grants](http://ysa.org/grants) for ideas. 👍



# Investigate future careers

Like many high schoolers, your teen might not know what she wants to do when she “grows up.” Now is a great time to explore her options. She’ll brush up on school-success skills, too, with these ideas.

→ **Identify strengths.** Suggest that she ask herself questions (“What am I good at that I also enjoy?”) and write down her answers (math). Then, she could use this information to find careers that match (accountant, statistician). *Bonus:* This will sharpen her critical-thinking abilities.



→ **Read about careers.** At the library, have her find career resources like *What Color Is Your Parachute? for teens* (Richard N. Bolles and Carol Christen). This book will help her link her passions, such as art or technology, with possible college majors (digital design) and dream jobs (animator). *Bonus:* She’ll boost her reading and research skills.

→ **Talk to people in different jobs.** By chatting with relatives and neighbors, she can get the skinny on what it’s really like to work as a teacher or a cake decorator. *Bonus:* She will practice communicating and listening. 👍



## Parent to Parent Bond over interests

I was struggling to connect with my older daughter—she’s all about sports, and sports have just never been my thing.

So when it was time to visit colleges with Trina, I decided to surprise her with tickets to a basketball game at one of the schools. She was happy to explain different aspects of the game to me, and it was great to enjoy the game together. Plus, it gave us something to talk about afterward.

That led me to another idea. Since I’ve been wanting to get in better shape, I asked to join Trina on her training runs for an upcoming race. She’s fine with taking walk breaks when I get tired, and she has been encouraging me. I’m looking forward to cheering her on at her race. But the best part? We’re talking, laughing, and really connecting. 👍



## Driving danger zones

Keep your teen safer in the car by helping him understand these three leading causes of car accidents.



- 1. Teen passengers.** The more friends your teenager has in his car, the more likely he is to have an accident. Insist that he obey your state’s law about how many passengers he can carry. Also, let him know *your* consequences for breaking it—in addition to his being responsible for fines if he’s pulled over.
- 2. Cell phones.** Forbid texting while driving. Here’s a way to impress the importance of this on your child. Ask him to read the last text he sent and think about whether that text was worth getting into a crash—possibly leading to serious injury or even death.
- 3. Alcohol.** Be firm that your high schooler must never drink or get in a car with someone who has been drinking. Let him know he can call you at any time for a safe ride home with no repercussions. 👍

## Q & A Step up class participation

**Q** My son gets good grades on written assignments, but his teachers say he rarely participates in class. How can I encourage him?

**A** Talking in front of others is an important life skill. Your son will feel more confident if he’s prepared. For example, while reading a novel that will be discussed in class the next day, he can jot down points he would like to make.



If he struggles to find something original to say during the discussion, he could “piggyback” on others’ points. He might comment on what another student says or answer a classmate’s question. Also, recommend that he jump into the discussion early. The longer he waits, the harder it may seem to chime in.

At home, let him practice speaking up by having him order pizza, make doctor appointments, and call companies’ customer service departments. 👍

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### Explain your math to me

If a look at your high schooler's math homework has you stumped, why not ask him to "tutor" you? He might teach you how to add polynomials, for example. Explaining concepts will help him understand them, and you'll show him that math matters to you, too.

### Practice assertiveness

Being assertive can make the difference between getting what you need and getting taken advantage of. Perhaps your teen needs to take time off work but feels nervous about approaching her boss. Role-play together until she feels comfortable asking politely and confidently.

### Movies as conversation starters

The next time you watch a movie with your teen, use it as a springboard to deeper conversations. Ask, "What did you think about the way the teenagers were portrayed?" Get a shrug in response? Say, "Let me share what I think." It's a safe way to talk about big issues without lecturing.

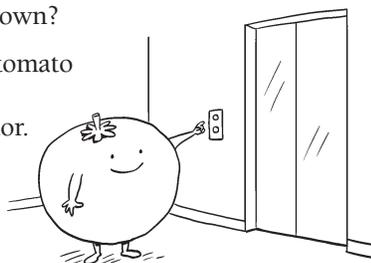
### Worth quoting

"You get the best out of others when you give the best of yourself."  
Harvey S. Firestone

### Just for fun

**Q:** What's small, round, and red and moves up and down?

**A:** A tomato in an elevator.



## Successful note-taking strategies

Taking useful notes can help your high schooler learn more and get better grades in every class. Share these techniques with her.

### Be brief

Suggest that your teenager quickly summarize, in her own words, what her teacher says or writes on the board. She might even use her texting skills to help her write faster. She could jot down "Xndr GR8" instead of "Alexander the Great," for instance.

### Elaborate

Encourage your child to leave wide margins on her paper and to double-space her notes. That gives her room to go back and fill in more information when she has time, perhaps in study hall or while waiting for after-school activities to start. She can add more detail, clarify anything that

doesn't make sense, or write questions to look up or ask her teacher.

### Experiment

Your high schooler could use different color pens and highlighters. She may discover that a particular color, or combination of colors, lets her visualize the material later. Also, some research shows that writing notes by hand rather than typing them helps people learn and remember more. 👍



## Ready for test day

To boost your teen's performance on standardized tests, consider this advice:

- It's important for your child to pay close attention during test review sessions in class. If his school offers sessions after school or on weekends, too, have him attend one.

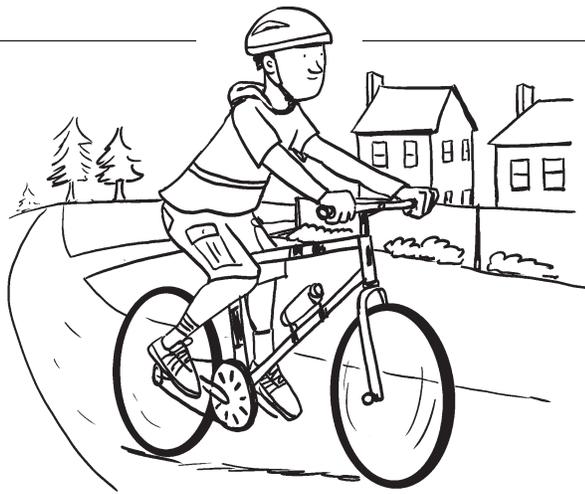
- The night before the test, encourage your high schooler to stock his backpack with supplies (sharpened pencils, approved calculator, student ID). Then, he should go to bed a little early. In the morning, he'll have time to eat a healthy breakfast and get to class before the bell rings—and he'll feel alert during the test. 👍



# Resilient teens

The ability to bounce back from problems and disappointments will help your teen now and when he's an adult. Try these ideas to build his resilience.

**Express emotions.** When your high schooler is going through a tough time, encourage him to talk to someone. If he's not ready to open up to you, he might confide in his best friend or the school counselor. Whether he's dealing with ending a relationship or being cut from the team, it may be easier for him to move on if he doesn't keep his feelings bottled up inside.



**Learn coping strategies.** Suggest that he develop “go-to” techniques he can count on when he needs to blow off steam or relax. If he doesn't land the part-time job he wanted or gets a lower grade than he expected, he might go for a bike ride, listen to upbeat music, or tune in to his favorite podcast.

*Tip:* During stressful times, it helps to have the comfort of habits. Encourage your teen to follow his regular routines, such as walking to school with his neighbor or making a healthy smoothie after school. 👍



## Q & A Reducing student loan debt

**Q** With rising costs, how can our daughter afford college without carrying huge debt afterward?

**A** This is a big concern for families today, but there are ways to limit—or even avoid—student loans.



Start by filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid at [fafsa.ed.gov](http://fafsa.ed.gov) before this year's June 30 deadline. Your teen may be eligible for grants or work-study programs.

Also, look for ways to reduce the costs associated with college. Suggest that your child apply to less-expensive schools or colleges known to give more financial aid. Or she could consider attending community college the first two years and then transferring to a four-year university. Another idea is for her to go to school nearby and live at home. 👍

## Parent to Parent Make your home the “hangout spot”

My son Brandon likes to spend time with his friends every weekend. And I like knowing that he's in a safe place with adult supervision. I realized that we could both get what we want if we created a fun hangout spot in our house for him and his friends.

So Brandon and I added a few teen-friendly touches to our family room. We hung a dartboard on the wall, found comfy pillows for the kids to sit on, and stocked a shelf with board games and card games.

Now when Brandon's friends come over, I offer them a snack and then “disappear” to give them privacy. They have a safe, alcohol-free, and drug-free place to hang out with a parent nearby—but not hovering over them. 👍



## Tie science to the real world

You can spark your high schooler's interest in science and technology by exploring the subjects together. Here's how.

### See it in action

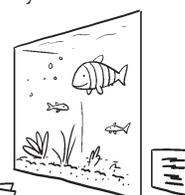
Visit a science center, a planetarium, a zoo, or an aquarium with her. If she's intrigued by what she sees, she could ask about volunteer or internship opportunities—and that might even lead to a science career one day.



### Talk about news

When you read about a STEM development that may affect teens, mention it to your child. For example, what does she think of driverless cars? What are the pros and cons of this technology?

*Tip:* Encourage her to check out teen-friendly science topics at [sciencenewsforstudents.org](http://sciencenewsforstudents.org). 👍



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### Take a summer class

Does your teen want to complete a high school requirement, get a jump on college, or pursue an interest this summer? Have her consider taking a class. Options include online classes, regular summer school, or dual enrollment at a community college. She can talk to her school counselor now to explore opportunities.

### DID YOU KNOW?

National high school graduation rates have climbed higher than ever—84 percent of the class of 2015–16 graduated on time. To help your teenager thrive in school, encourage him to build good relationships with a few teachers. He could schedule after-school chats to ask questions, share ideas, and get advice.

### Helmet safety

Your child might resist wearing a bike helmet, saying it's "not cool." But an approved, properly fitted helmet offers protection in a fall and reduces the risk of head and brain injuries. So let your teen know it's like wearing a seat belt in the car: a requirement. (For quick fit tips, watch [safekids.org/video/safety-seconds-bike-helmets](http://safekids.org/video/safety-seconds-bike-helmets).)

### Worth quoting

"We all live under the same sky, but we don't all have the same horizon."  
Konrad Adenauer

### Just for fun

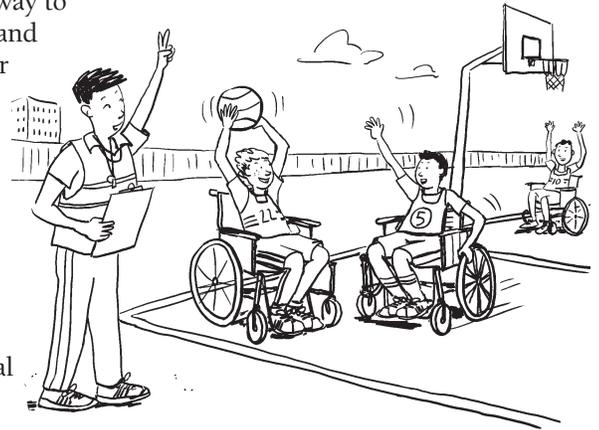
**Q:** What happened when a farmer counted 95 cows in her field?

**A:** After she rounded them up, she had 100.



## "I can make a difference"

Volunteering is a wonderful way to get involved in the community and help others. It can also give your high schooler skills and experience to list on college applications and to use in the future. Encourage him to choose a cause he cares about and an approach that works for him.



### Serve

Volunteer service opportunities exist everywhere—in formal programs or by helping people informally.

**Examples:** Walk dogs at a pet shelter. Help coach in a wheelchair basketball league. Stock shelves at a food pantry. Make audio recordings of books for the visually impaired. Shop for a housebound relative. Do yard work for an elderly neighbor. Pack disaster-relief kits.

### Gain skills

Suggest that your teenager get training that could make a difference in others' lives.

**Examples:** Take courses in CPR and first aid. Get certified as a lifeguard. Train to be an EMT (emergency medical

technician). Learn to help lead English conversation classes at your local library. Enroll in training to become a peer counselor or teen crisis hotline volunteer.

### Stand up

Your teen can also have a positive impact by standing up for his beliefs, for people who are "outsiders," and against injustices he sees.

**Examples:** Start a petition. Create a neighborhood watch program. Partner up with a lonely classmate on a class project. Reach out to a student who is being bullied. Help people register to vote. 👍

## Fun with word games

Having a rich vocabulary can make your teen's writing and speaking more powerful. Play these language-building games together.

■ **Letter chain.** Pick a topic, such as music. The first player says a word related to the topic. The next player gives a word beginning with the last letter of the previous word, and so on. *Example:* guitar, rhapsody, yodel. The game ends when a player gets stumped.

■ **Category collection.** Choose a category (trees). Give each player paper and pencil. Set a timer for 60 seconds. Each person writes as many related words as she can (*birch, fir, apple*). When the timer stops, the longest list wins. *Variation for three or more players:* Cross off words another player has. The person with the most unique words wins. 👍

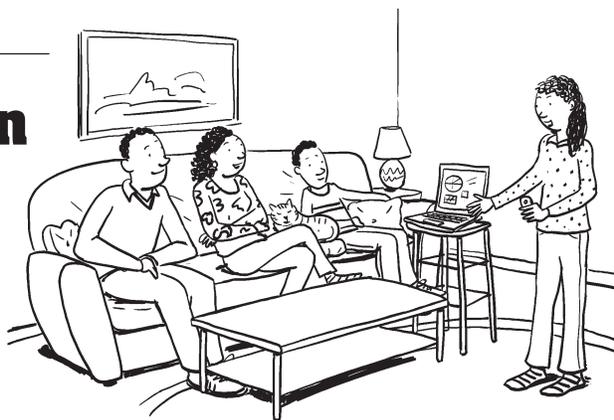


# Boost presentation skills

Learning to speak confidently in front of a group and to give presentations that “wow” prepares your teenager for success in school and the workplace. These ideas can help her develop her technique.

## Watch TED Talks

The popular website *ted.com* features thousands of videos from top speakers. Topics include science, business, education, psychology, and more. Your high schooler can even watch TED Talks on public speaking and making better presentations. *Tip:* After learning from the pros, she could create her own talk on a favorite topic to share with your family.



library. Besides creating PowerPoint slides, she can learn to add sound effects, music, videos, photos, and charts. *Tip:* Encourage her to incorporate these elements for her next class presentation, campaign speech for student government, or proposal at a school club meeting. 👍

## Add tech twists

Great presentations often involve more than “talking heads.” To make a good impression, your teen might include visuals that drive home key points. Suggest that she experiment with different computer programs at home, school, or the



## Q & A Taming teen tempers

**Q** My son often lets his temper get the best of him. How can I help him control his anger?

**A** When you combine the stress of high school with hormone-fueled mood swings, it's not surprising that temper flare-ups are common at this age.



Suggest that your son hit a mental pause button when he feels anger building. He might notice warning signs like

his heart racing, his shoulders tensing up, and his voice getting louder.

Once he knows how his body reacts to anger, he can put coping steps in place. He might take a calming deep breath or count to 10.

Taking just a few seconds to pause allows your teen to gain awareness of his emotions, breathe, and think first. As a result, he'll be less likely to let his anger take control. 👍

## Make prom more affordable

A memorable prom doesn't have to break the bank. Share these money-saving tips with your high schooler.

**Formal wear.** Ask friends, relatives, and neighbors if they have a tux or gown you can borrow. Or shop from sale racks or consignment stores. Also, many schools and community groups hold free prom dress events in the weeks before prom.

**Salon services.** Play salon and spa at home with a group of friends. Do each other's nails, hair, and makeup. Another idea is to get your hair done at a cosmetology school, which will charge less.

**Dinner.** Rather than going out for an expensive pre-prom meal, host a potluck. Each couple can bring a dish, and you could set a table with nice dishes and candlelight. Or everyone can pitch in a few dollars and you can order pizzas to eat at home. 👍



## Parent to Parent Why grammar still matters

In an age of “LOL” and emojis, many teens (including my daughter) wonder whether grammar matters anymore.

I explained to Sarah that poor grammar can get in the way of communicating clearly. She might have a great idea to share, but if it's filled with mistakes, people are less likely to take it—and her—seriously. And when she starts applying to colleges or jobs, sloppy writing could distract from her good qualities.

Bad punctuation may also cause confusion and even change the meaning of a sentence. To let Sarah see this for herself, I pointed out a sign without punctuation: “No trespassing violators will be prosecuted”—it sounded like trespassers *wouldn't* be prosecuted! Sarah realized it should read: “No trespassing. Violators will be prosecuted.”

Now we often look for mistakes on signs and laugh as we correct them. I think she's starting to understand why language rules *do* matter. 👍



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