



Anxious Non-Attendance Toolkit

*This is part three of a three-part resource for parents and carers on Anxious Non-Attendance in education settings. This is a **Toolkit** of useful resources, to make it easier for parents and carers to support their child or young person.*



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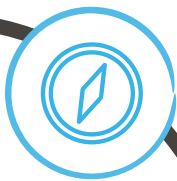


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Now you have read our **What is?** and **How to?** guides on Anxious Non-Attendance, it is time to choose the tools which will be most helpful in supporting your child or young person.

This guide is **part three of three resources** for parents and carers on **Anxious Non-Attendance**. The **first** resource in the series looks at how anxiety and the Three Areas of Difference can lead to Anxious Non-Attendance for autistic children and young people, and the **second** provides suggested strategies and advice.



What is: Anxious Non-Attendance and how may it Impact Autistic Children and Young People?



How to: Support Your Child With Anxious Non-Attendance



Tools to Support Your Child With Anxious Non-Attendance



Parent Resources

Overview of the Tools in the *Anxious Non-Attendance Toolkit:*

Tool 1 – What do I Find Easy and Difficult at School?

This tool is a set of three questionnaires which can help you to build a picture of why your child or young person is finding it difficult to attend school. The responses your child or young person gives can feed into a conversation with the school to help agree suggestions for reasonable adjustments.

Tool 2 – What if...?

This tool is guidance to create a set of ‘What if...?’ cards to address situations in school that your child or young person has been finding difficult.

Tool 3 – My Friendship and Support Circle

This tool is a way of supporting your autistic child or young person to think about (and visually represent) the nature of their relationships with different people. This will then allow them to consider the relative ‘closeness’ or each relationship regarding who to go to for support.

Tool 4 – Colour-Coding School Timetables and Maps

Colour-coding school timetables and maps of the school environment can help to identify lessons and areas of the school that are causing your child or young person to feel anxious about attending and can initiate conversations about the reasons why.

Tool 5 – Reasonable Adjustments That Could Help me in School

This tool contains examples of reasonable adjustments that could be made within school to support your child or young person. You could consider, in discussion with your child or young person, which may work for them and use their responses when requesting support from the school.

Tool 6 – Home-School Communication

This tool is a template for informing school staff about strengths, differences and support needs. It can be used to update staff on distressed behaviour or support needs you have noticed at home, and for staff to update you on anything within the school environment that could affect your child or young person’s levels of anxiety.



Overview of the Tools in the *Anxious Non-Attendance Toolkit:*

Tool 7 – Distressed Behaviour Record

This tool is a template for recording instances of distressed behaviour that you notice at home. This is to help in spotting potential triggers for anxiety and overwhelm and to request reasonable adjustments and support to address these, particularly if your child or young person is ‘masking’ and appearing to cope well in school.

Tool 8 – Anxious Non-Attendance: Questions to ask During a Meeting with school Staff

This tool includes questions you might ask during a meeting with school staff to work alongside them in planning support.



Parent Resources



Tool 1 - What do I Find Easy and Difficult at School?

🔍 What is it?

This tool is a set of three questionnaires which can help you to build a picture of why your child or young person is finding it difficult to attend school. The responses your child or young person gives can feed into a conversation with the school and can help agree suggestions for reasonable adjustments to support them.

🕒 When to use it?

This tool can be used if your child or young person is finding aspects of school difficult or is experiencing Anxious Non-Attendance. Using the tool may be helpful if your child or young person is finding it difficult to identify the aspects of school causing most anxiety.

✅ How to use it?

Find a time when your child or young person is happy to chat about their experiences at school – avoid continuing to work through the statements if they are becoming anxious or upset. Work through each section, talking about each statement and completing the tick box chart to show whether it applies to your child or young person, does not apply to them or sometimes applies to them.

The responses your child or young person gives can feed into a conversation with the school and can help in agreeing reasonable adjustments to support them.



Tool 1 - What do I Find Easy and Difficult at School?



Sensory Processing and Integration

	No ☒	Sometimes ?	Yes ☑
I can concentrate easily with a lot of background noise.			
I find listening to music helps me to concentrate.			
I find smells distracting/uncomfortable (e.g. in the Science classrooms).			
I find some of my school uniform uncomfortable.			
I struggle if the room is too hot or too cold.			
I find the lighting in the classrooms uncomfortable – it feels too bright.			
I find the corridors too busy.			
I enjoy PE lessons.			
I have a comfortable place to go during break and lunchtimes.			
I prefer being outside to being indoors.			
I find some sounds uncomfortable (e.g. chairs on floors, fire alarms).			
I often feel very tired after school.			



Parent Resources



Tool 1 - What do I Find Easy and Difficult at School?



Flexibility, Information Processing, and Understanding

	No ☒	Sometimes ?	Yes ☑
I need staff to explain tasks in a different way.			
I have to work hard to remember information from lessons.			
I have topics I'm very interested in, which I can remember a lot of information about.			
I often have to ask people to repeat what they have said.			
I find it difficult to 'take in' a lot of information.			
If more than one person is talking, I need them to take it in turns so I can understand.			
I find it easier to understand written instructions rather than spoken instructions.			
I always remember to pack things I need for school.			
I learn better via video or audio (e.g. YouTube or podcasts).			
I need support to help me to start tasks.			
My brain works better at home than at school.			
There are certain lessons I find difficult to attend.			



Parent Resources



Tool 1 - What do I Find Easy and Difficult at School?



Social Understanding and Communication

	No ☒	Sometimes ?	Yes ☑
I have some people I like to spend time with at school.			
I want to make some more friends.			
I like to spend time by myself.			
I worry about working with other pupils if the teacher chooses the groups.			
I would rather work on my own than in a group.			
I would rather work on my own than in a pair.			
I find it difficult to ask for help in lessons.			
I find it difficult to speak to people I don't know well.			
I am quiet in lessons - I don't talk very much.			
I worry about being bullied.			
I find it difficult to tell if people are being genuine or not.			
I know how to tell others when I am feeling uncomfortable or anxious.			



Parent Resources



Tool 2 - What if...?

? What is it?

Work with your child or young person to create a set of 'What if...?' cards to address situations in school that they have been finding difficult.

🕒 When to use it?

This tool can be used when your child or young person has identified situations that have caused or may cause them anxiety at school. For example, they may have talked about worries related to being late, forgetting homework, or having supply staff.

✅ How to use it?

Using the template, add situations to each card that are a cause, or potential cause, of anxiety. With your child or young person, think of two possible strategies or solutions that could help in that situation. Your child or young person can then use the cards to help them identify solutions when they encounter situations in school that could be potentially stressful, helping to reduce their anxiety.

💡 For example:

What if I feel too worried to go to next lesson?

I could go to the SEN Hub and ask to work there for that lesson.

Or, I could ask a friend to ask the member of staff to request support for me.



Tool 2 - What if...?

<p>What if I feel too worried to go to next lesson?</p> <p>I could go to the SEN Hub and ask to work there for that lesson.</p> <p>Or I could ask a friend to ask the member of staff to request support for me.</p>	<p>What if</p> <p>I could...</p> <p>Or I could...</p>	<p>What if</p> <p>I could...</p> <p>Or I could...</p>	<p>What if</p> <p>I could...</p> <p>Or I could...</p>
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Tool 2 - What if...?

<p>What if I feel too worried to go to next lesson?</p> <p>I could go to the SEN Hub and ask to work there for that lesson.</p> <p>Or I could ask a friend to ask the member of staff to request support for me.</p>	<p>What if</p> <p>I could...</p> <p>Or I could...</p>	<p>What if</p> <p>I could...</p> <p>Or I could...</p>	<p>What if</p> <p>I could...</p> <p>Or I could...</p>
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Tool 3 - My Friendship and Support Circle

? What is it?

This tool is a visual graphic to support your autistic child or young person to think about the nature of their relationships with different people. This will then allow them to consider the relative 'closeness' of each relationship and help them to decide who to go to for support in different situations.

🕒 When to use it?

When thinking about who your autistic child or young person can go to for support if they are experiencing anxiety or Anxious Non-Attendance. It can also help in discussing how a different person could help for different situations – for example, a friend if they are feeling anxious at break or lunchtime, or a Teaching Assistant if they have been finding a certain lesson challenging.

✓ How to use it?

Work with your child or young person to think about who they can go to for support and friendship within and outside of the school environment. For example, family members, friends and members of staff may all be included. This may be particularly helpful if they have a Teaching Assistant or other trusted member of staff that they can go to if they are finding something difficult in school.

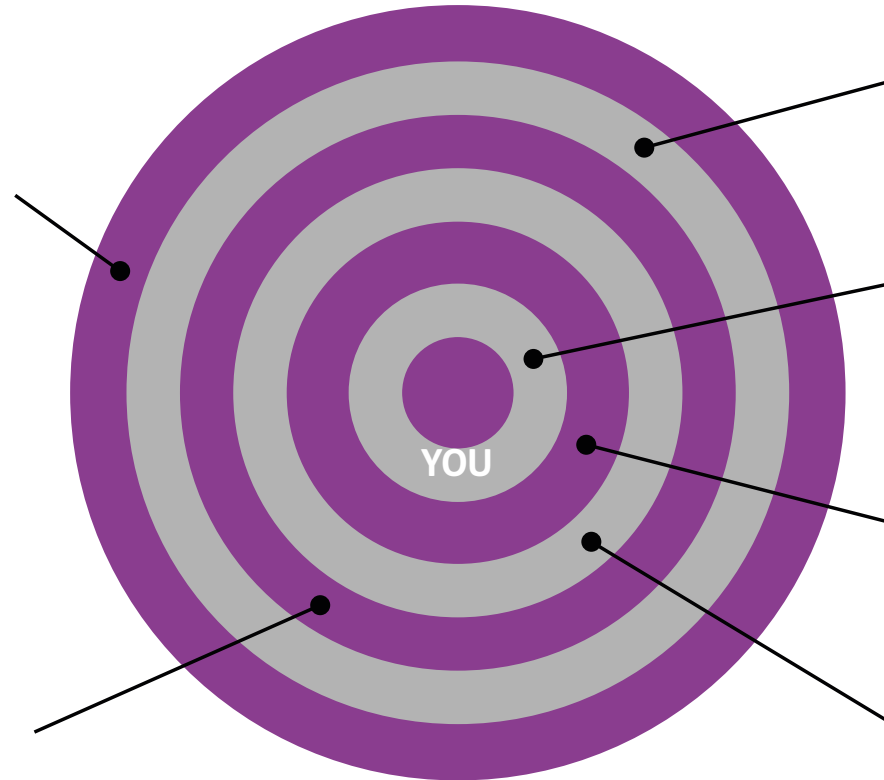
Put your child or young person's name or photo in the middle (the innermost circle). Then, working out from the middle, put in the names and/or photos of people they know, who they could go to for support, starting with those they are closest to first – this also provides an opportunity to talk about trust. For each person they include, talk about why they could go to them for support and for what type of situation. Some will be able to give support within school, others may be someone to talk to outside of school (for example, extended family members).

Naming specific friends may also boost your child or young person's confidence if they are feeling that friendships are a challenge, or if they are feeling socially isolated at school.

However, you may need to consider carefully whether this will benefit your child or young person – if friendships are a significant cause of anxiety, then it may be more helpful to just use this tool to identify trusted adults to go to for support.



Tool 3 - My Friendship and Support Circle



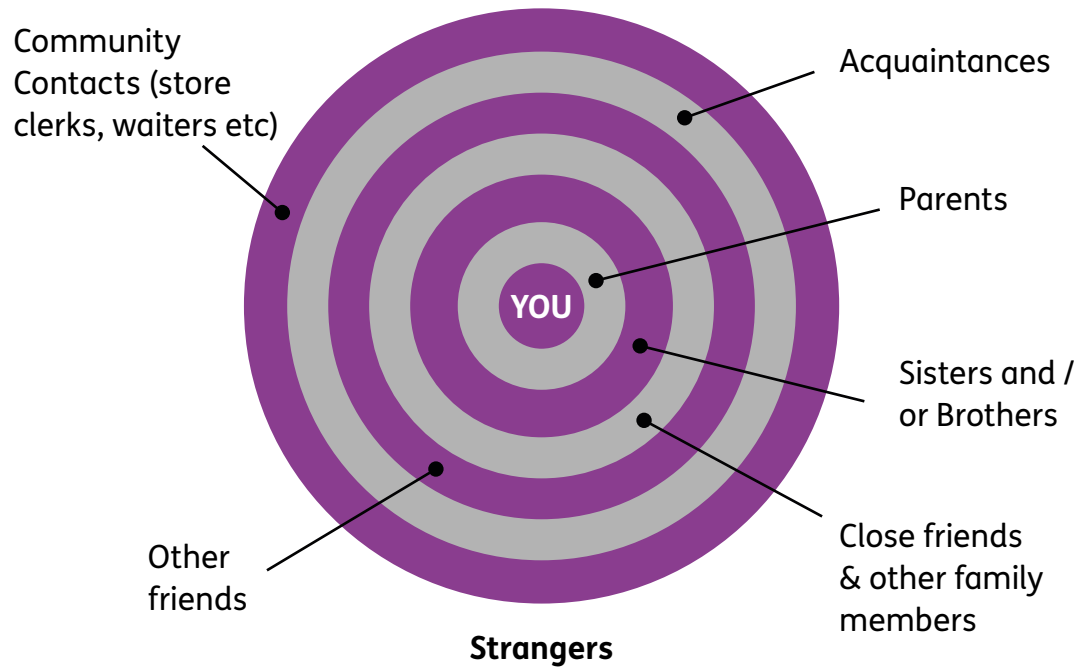
Developed by Jeannie McAfee and extended by Kevin Baskerville



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Tool 3 - My Friendship and Support Circle

Example



Where are you in someone else's circle?



What behaviours affect your position when in the circle?

Developed by Jeannie McAfee and extended by Kevin Baskerville



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Tool 4 - Colour-Coding School Timetables and Maps

? What is it?

Colour-coding school timetables and maps of the school environment can help to identify lessons and areas of the school that are causing your child or young person to feel anxious about attending and can initiate conversations about the reasons why.

🕒 When to use it?

When thinking about the support your child or young person may need to feel more comfortable within the school environment and whether certain places or lessons are creating barriers to wellbeing and attendance. It may be useful in preparation for initial meetings with staff.

✓ How to use it?

When your child or young person is feeling comfortable with talking about school, discuss with them how they feel about each lesson. Colour code the timetable to reflect their feelings about each lesson. For example:

- If they feel comfortable in lesson, colour code green.
- If they sometimes feel comfortable in lesson, colour code yellow.
- If they do not feel comfortable in lesson, colour code red.

Your child or young person may want to choose their own colour coding to reflect their feelings – this can be a good way to open a conversation about how the lessons make them feel and why.

The same activity can be carried out using a map of the school. This can be colour coded to show which areas of the school they are comfortable in, sometimes comfortable in or not comfortable in. The colour coded timetable or map can be used during conversations with school to request support. Many schools also carry out these activities to identify areas where learners are finding attendance difficult.



Tool 4 - Colour-Coding School Timetables and Maps

Always finds PE difficult as it requires undressing and dressing in front of others, collaboration with other pupils and physical coordination.

Normally, Chemistry is mostly manageable with reasonable adjustments. However, when the lesson follows PE, which is particularly challenging, this carries over into subsequent lessons.

	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4	Lesson 5
Monday	Biology	PE	Chemistry	English	Maths
Tuesday	PE	Biology	English	Maths	Geography
Wednesday	French	English	Maths	History	French
Thursday	English	RE	Maths	Citizenship	Citizenship
Friday	Chemistry	Business Studies	Maths	Business Studies	English

Normally, English lessons are mostly manageable but finds afternoon lessons particularly difficult. Finds abstract concepts ideas and creative writing especially challenging.



Tool 5 - Reasonable Adjustments That Could Help Me in School

? What is it?

This tool contains examples of reasonable adjustments that could be made within school to support your child or young person. You could consider, in discussion with your child, which may work for them and use their responses when requesting support from the school.

🕒 When to use it?

When thinking about the support your child or young person may need to feel more comfortable within the school environment. It may be useful in preparation for initial meetings with staff.

✅ How to use it?

When your child or young person is comfortable with talking about school, discuss with them which of the suggestions they think could work for supporting them. Be careful to avoid making promises to your child or young person about reasonable adjustments – instead present these as things that you could ask school about.

For each statement, tick whether your child or young person thinks the example reasonable adjustment could help them, could maybe help them, or would not help them. When complete, you could use this in a conversation with school to request support and adjustments.



Tool 5 - Reasonable Adjustments That Could Help Me in School



Social Interaction

	No ☒	Maybe ?	Yes ☑
Let me choose to work alone instead of with a partner or in a group.			
Find a space in the classroom where I can go to if I need time to work by myself.			
Support me if I experience teasing or bullying.			
Identify another pupil to mentor me.			
Find somewhere quiet I can go during break or lunchtime.			
Set up clubs I could go to.			



Parent Resources



Tool 5 - Reasonable Adjustments That Could Help Me in School



Adjustments to Communication

	No ☒	Maybe ?	Yes ☑
Use symbols, photos or pictures to help me to understand.			
Give me time to think about what has been said.			
Write things down so I can read them later.			
Check in with me to make sure I have understood instructions.			
Be aware that I might sometimes misunderstand your tone of voice.			
Understand that I am not being rude by not making eye contact – it is uncomfortable for me.			
Sit or stand beside me instead of in front of me when you talk to me.			
Let me continue working or playing while we talk.			



Tool 5 - Reasonable Adjustments That Could Help Me in School



Adjustments for Information Processing and Flexibility Differences

	No ☒	Maybe ?	Yes ☑
Give me advanced warning of any changes to the classroom, timetable, or ways of doing things.			
Be consistent in applying the school rules.			
Make adjustments relating to my support needs (for example, letting me wear slightly different uniform, lend me equipment if I forget mine, or understand if I'm sometimes late to lesson).			
Using a visual timetable – for example, with times and symbols.			
Create a timetable that includes when assignments are due, key dates and a schedule for exam preparation.			
Break tasks down into smaller chunks.			
More practice exams and preparation sessions, additional time or a quiet area to complete tests.			
Switch on subtitles for videos when they are available.			



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Tool 5 - Reasonable Adjustments That Could Help Me in School



Adjustments to the Sensory Environment

	No ☒	Maybe ?	Yes ☑
Try to keep the noise level lower in class.			
Let me wear ear defenders in class.			
Keep the volume of videos lower.			
Let me go to a quieter or less visually distracting part of the room.			
Let me use fidget toys or comforters.			
Give me time for movement breaks.			
Let me leave class early to avoid busy corridors.			
Let me wear an alternative to the uniform that is more comfortable for me.			
Reduce the number of 'busy' displays in the room.			
Let me use a time out card, or other signal, to allow time out of lessons.			



Parent Resources



Tool 6 - Home-School Communication Template

? What is it?

This tool is a template for informing setting staff about strengths, differences and support needs. It can be used to update staff on distressed behaviour or support needs you have noticed at home, and for staff to update you on anything within school that could affect your child or young person's levels of anxiety.

🕒 When to use it?

This tool is more appropriate for Primary aged children, or in Secondary if a Teaching Assistant is working regularly with your child or young person. It can be used to support communication between home and school, including as a template for responses if the school have provided their own home-school communication book. Some families may want to use this each day, others may prefer to use it occasionally, depending on the support needs of the child or young person.

✅ How to use it?

This tool is a template for informing setting staff about strengths, differences and support needs. It can be used to update staff on distressed behaviour or support needs you have noticed at home, and for staff to update you on anything within school that could affect your child or young person's levels of anxiety.



Tool 6 - Home-School Communication Template



Home

1. Messages from home:

2. Situations, circumstances or events outside of school that could affect how _____ is feeling today:

3. Good news from home:



Tool 6 - Home-School Communication Template



School

1. Messages from school:
2. What went well today:
3. found this difficult today:
4. Situations, circumstances or events in school that could affect how is feeling today:
5. Advance notice of changes or events in school:



Tool 7 - Distressed Behaviour Record

? What is it?

This tool is a template for recording instances of distressed behaviour that you notice at home. This is to help in spotting potential triggers for anxiety and overwhelm and to request reasonable adjustments and support to address these, particularly if your child or young person is 'masking' and appearing to cope well in school.

🕒 When to use it?

The tool can be used when you have noticed that your child or young person has been experiencing distressed behaviour, extreme overwhelm or sensory overload. These may be external signs, such as meltdowns, anger or freezing, or may be internal signs, such as stomach pains or exhaustion. This can be used to explain to staff in school that, even if your child or young person seems 'fine' in school, they are showing signs of anxiety once home.

✅ How to use it?

Following an incidence of distressed behaviour, record on the template anything that had happened before, how the distressed behaviour presented, and what happened after (this can include anything that helped your child or young person to feel calm). If your child or young person wants to talk about it, you can also record how they felt about the incident, which could give an idea how to support in future. An example situation is included within the template.

The record can then be used in meetings with school, as evidence to request support or reasonable adjustments.



Tool 7 - Distressed Behaviour Record

Before the incident	During the incident	After the incident	How child / young person felt about the incident
<p>Example: [Child's name] came home from school upset about a Science test that they hadn't known about.</p>	<p>Example: They went to their room and did not want to speak to anyone – they shouted at everyone to go away and leave them alone.</p>	<p>Example: They came downstairs for something to eat later that evening. They didn't want to talk about it at that point.</p>	<p>Example: They felt ashamed for shouting at others, and have said they are worried they've done badly in the test. They are worried they might be made to re-take it.</p>



Tool 8 - Anxious Non-Attendance: Questions to ask During a Meeting with School Staff

? What is it?

This tool includes questions you might ask during a meeting with school staff to work alongside them in planning support.

🕒 When to use it?

Use during a meeting with school staff to work alongside them in planning support. It is better that the meeting takes place before they have reached the point of non-attendance – **reasonable adjustments put in place following a conversation with staff may prevent them from reaching this stage**. However, a meeting may also be useful if your child/young person has been absent, and reasonable adjustments need to be put into place to enable them to return.

✓ How to use it?

Each question includes space for you to add notes (for example, of planned reasonable adjustments, or further actions that need to be taken and by who). You could also add any further questions that you may think of prior to the meeting.



Tool 8 - Anxious Non-Attendance: Questions to ask During a Meeting with School Staff

Questions	School response	Parent/carer notes
What has been going well? What is our/my child/young person good at in school?		
What difficulties or differences have you noticed in school?		
How would you like us to share information with you about our/my child/young person's strengths, differences and support needs?		
How will you include our/my child/young person's views when putting together reasonable adjustments to support their return to school?		
How have staff been supported and prepared for our/my child/young person's return to school? What information has been shared with them and what are they going to do to implement support?		



Tool 8 - Anxious Non-Attendance: Questions to ask During a Meeting with School Staff

Questions	School response	Parent/carer notes
How will reasonable adjustments be monitored and updated? Who will be responsible for this?		
Who do I/we or our/my child/young person contact in school if there are any concerns? What method of communication would work best for this – for example, emails or telephone calls?		
Has a member of staff who our/my child/young person knows and trusts been identified as their key worker? Will they have time allocated for providing support?		
What resources are available to support in our/my child/young person's return to school?		



Tool 8 - Anxious Non-Attendance: Questions to ask During a Meeting with School Staff

Questions	School response	Parent/carer notes
Has any additional support been applied for or granted? (For example, additional pupil funding, mental health support, Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)).		
Is there a safe space that our/my child/ young person can go to during the day if they need support? Do they know how to request to leave lessons or access this space?		
Are any external services involved?		
Has a gradual return to lessons been planned and how will this work?		



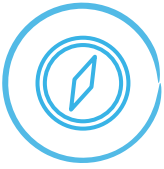
Tool 8 - Anxious Non-Attendance: Questions to ask During a Meeting with School Staff

Questions	School response	Parent/carer notes



Next Steps:

If you haven't done so already, check out the other two resources in this series on Anxious Non-Attendance in schools:



What is: Anxious Non-Attendance?



How to: Support Your Child With Anxious Non-Attendance.



Parent Resources

References and Further Reading:

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