# FAKE

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# FACT

Introducing source criticism in the classroom | SI. Swedish Institute

#Challenge
YourFacts

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# YourFacts

# CON TENTS

# INTRODUCTION

**Welcome!**

**Today, in the age of the internet, more information is spread much more rapidly than a couple of decades ago. Information literacy and the ability to separate reliable information from unreliable information is thus becoming more important. And to do that requires both knowledge and having access to the proper fact-checking tools.**

Primarily intended for students in secondary and upper secondary school, this Fake ≠ fact educational material revolves around source criticism – the process of evaluating an information source – and propaganda, a technique that you need source criticism skills to decode.

The material is divided into three separate but interconnected parts. Lesson one is based on information developed by Viralgranskaren (The Viral Scrutineer) and Webbstjärnan/The Internet Foundation in Sweden (IIS) and focuses on general issues of source criticism. It contains a brief lecture followed by student exercises.

Based on material developed by the Swedish Media Council, the second part is a combination of instructions and exercises, but takes a closer look at propaganda in relation to source criticism. Because of the amount of material covered in this lesson, we recommend that you spread it over two separate class periods.

The third part involves students making their own propaganda film based on your instructions. The filmmaking lesson is estimated to extend over four class periods and requires some technical tools and online access. (The lesson is optional for schools *not* participating in the #ChallengeYourFacts competition.)

As their teacher, you know your pupils best. Choose the tasks that suit you and your students and adapt them to your needs.

*Good luck!*

## LESSON ONE

# SOURCE CRITICISM

### TEACHERS' RESOURCES

The first lesson describes sources and source criticism. You will give a lecture to the class based on the material below (no more than 30 – 60 minutes). After the lecture, the class will participate in and give answers to the exercises. You should dedicate approximately two hours to lesson one.

Based on the texts below you can put together your own lecture and briefly explain the issues to your class.

You could introduce your lecture by showing a short video: https://vimeo.com/243129187/6bd9606f35

### What is a source?

A source is the site or material from which you retrieve information. In traditional source criticism, sources are divided into written, oral and physical. On the web, different types of sources can be linked, for example a text that links to a film in which someone reproduces an eyewitness source.

### Source criticism

Source criticism means that you systematically examine sources and assess their credibility. It is a method that allows us to consciously choose which sources we want to use.

One thing that makes online criticism difficult is that no one decides who may contribute information on the internet. It can also be difficult to evaluate sources on the internet because the amount of information available is so vast.

### Criteria for source criticism

Source-critical methodology is based on four criteria:

- **Genuine**
  Is the source what it implies? Is the source an original or a copy? Is it genuine or false?

- **Current**
  Is the information current or could there be newer findings? How long after the occurrence was the source established?

- **Independent**
  Is the source independent or is the information dependent on other sources? In what way?

- **Objective**
  Is the information from the source biased? Whose interests does the source represent? Is there conflicting information available from other sources? How credible is the conflicting information?

### How to do it

**For texts,** you can copy a header or whole phrase from a source material on the web and paste it into a search engine with quotation marks on both sides.

**For images,** you can use the Google Image Search feature (images.google.com). Right-click on the image and select 'Search Google for Image' to find out more about it. Using the web service TinEye (www.tineye.com), you can upload a digital image, or enter an exact URL for an image, to find out where it is used.
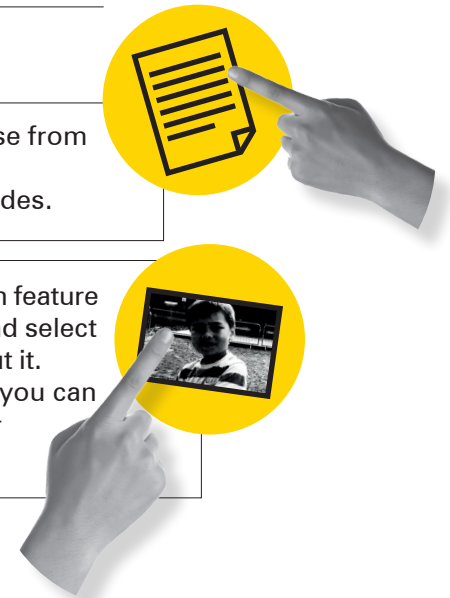
**For audio,** determining whether a digital recording found online is authentic is difficult. A search by title or file name can give you clues.

**When reviewing video material,** it's important to look at things like the quality of the clip and who is responsible for the upload. The comments may provide additional clues.
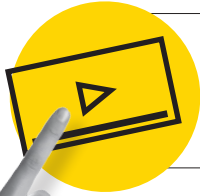
## Biased information – online risks

Essentially all information is biased to some extent. Always consider how the information is biased and for what reason.

Here are some examples:

- **Misleading content**. Fake news and reports can be spread through social media to established media.

- **Viral entertainment**. Entertainment is created for two reasons: as entertainment for the receiver (to spread it to others) and to create advertising revenue for the creators.

- **Hidden marketing**. A common practice is to conceal advertising by making it look like journalism; this is called content marketing.

- **Fraudulent business**. Most people who use the internet regularly have at some point encountered unreliable commercial agents.

- **Rumours and defamations**. Once they have been put forward enough times, lies may ultimately be accepted as truths. Just like in real life, it's good to remain neutral regarding statements that you cannot prove.

## Source-critical online tools

**Did you know, that…**
A domain name system (DNS) can help you draw conclusions about who is behind the source of a web address. Shorten the web link from right to left. That will bring you to the main address where there may be information about who created the content (after www and before the top-level domain, such as .com). You will find a complete list of all top-level domains, including those of different countries at: www.iana.org/domains/root/db/

**Who's behind?**
If you want to know who the proprietor of a domain name is, you can use whois.com, a database providing information on domain registrations.

**Who else quoted your source?**
There is an easy way to investigate which sites link to the source you want to review. Using the keyword link and a colon, followed by a URL (link: www.blogspot.com) in the search field, you can use Google to find out which sites link to the address and how many they are.

## Questions when surfing the web

According to recent estimates, there could be as many as 2 billion websites currently registered in the world. Before using information from a website, make sure to answer the following questions to evaluate it.

- Who is the sender? Is there an information or contact page? How do you rate the knowledge you receive about the sender?

- What purpose does the website have and how is the content affected? Does it want to inform, present facts, propagate an opinion, sell something or entertain? Does it have more than one purpose? Is it financed through ads?

- Who is the target audience? Is the content complicated or easy to understand? Are the facts correct? Is there any information about sources? Is there information about when the site was last updated? Are the links functioning?

- Can you get information from other sources? What other sites link to the site you are examining?

### Search engines

You should also be critical of the tools you use to find sources online. Most search engines are profit-driven and your online behaviour might affect your search results. It may be useful to search the same keywords in several search engines and compare the results.

Duckduckgo.com is based on open source and does not store data about you, as for instance cookie technology does. Startpage.com sends your keywords to Google and then presents the answers to its own site. Google's algorithms cannot use your user data to customise search results; the search will be anonymous web traffic to and from Startpage and Google.

> **REMEMBER!**
> **Scepticism is the most important characteristic of the source examiner.**
>
> **!**

*Now let's move on to the students' exercices.*

# LESSON ONE

**1**

# SOURCE CRITICISM

## EXERCISES

### Exercise 1: Your school's website

Visit your school's website and describe what a visitor comes across. Describe the purpose(s) of the website through examples. What images are used and what purpose do they serve?

Analyse the site's content based on the source-critical criteria.

- **Genuine.** Decide if the site is what it claims to be. How can a visitor tell? Provide clear examples.

- **Current.** Is the information on the site current or not? How can a visitor tell? Provide examples. How does the currency of the source affect its credibility?

- **Independent.** Consider the independence of the source. Is the site stand-alone or is it part of a broader collection of websites? What other sites does it link to? Is the site dependent on other sources? If yes, how can you tell?

- **Objective.** Decide whether the information on the site is biased. If yes, how? Are there any hidden or open values that the website communicates? What are they?

After looking at the different criteria, you should be able to draw conclusions about the credibility of the source. Also try to draw conclusions as to whether it is a reliable source. If yes, who is it for?

### Exercise 2: Practise the source-critical concepts

Allow students time to discuss the criteria of source criticism, based on the school's website. The task is to search for information and review the website based on one of the roles listed below:

- A prospective student

- A curious parent

- A job-seeking teacher

Does the school's website serve as a reliable source for these three audiences? The purpose is to teach students that we handle sources differently depending on what use we have for the information provided. Can all three groups find what they are looking for? Do they look at the source in different ways? Does the visitor's perspective affect the credibility of the source?

### Exercise 3: Discuss difficulties associated with examining online sources

Continue using the school's website as an example. What difficulties do you experience when critically reviewing the site? Discuss challenges that arise when doing source criticism on the internet. Consider how the school's website handles:

- Different media formats

- The ease of changing information

- Anonymity

- Visitors' lack of knowledge

Consider with your students how the school's website can become more credible and clear towards different visitors who might be looking for information.

### Exercise 4: The blog as source

Choose a blog written in the students' language and look at how the blog is presented.

- Who is behind the source?

- How is the blogger presented?

- Who is behind the website?

- What is the purpose of the blog?

Evaluate how and if you could use the blog as a source. Discuss using the infographic on the right.

### Exercise 5: Who owns the domain?

Examine the school's website address. Use whois.com to check who owns the domain. Discussion questions:
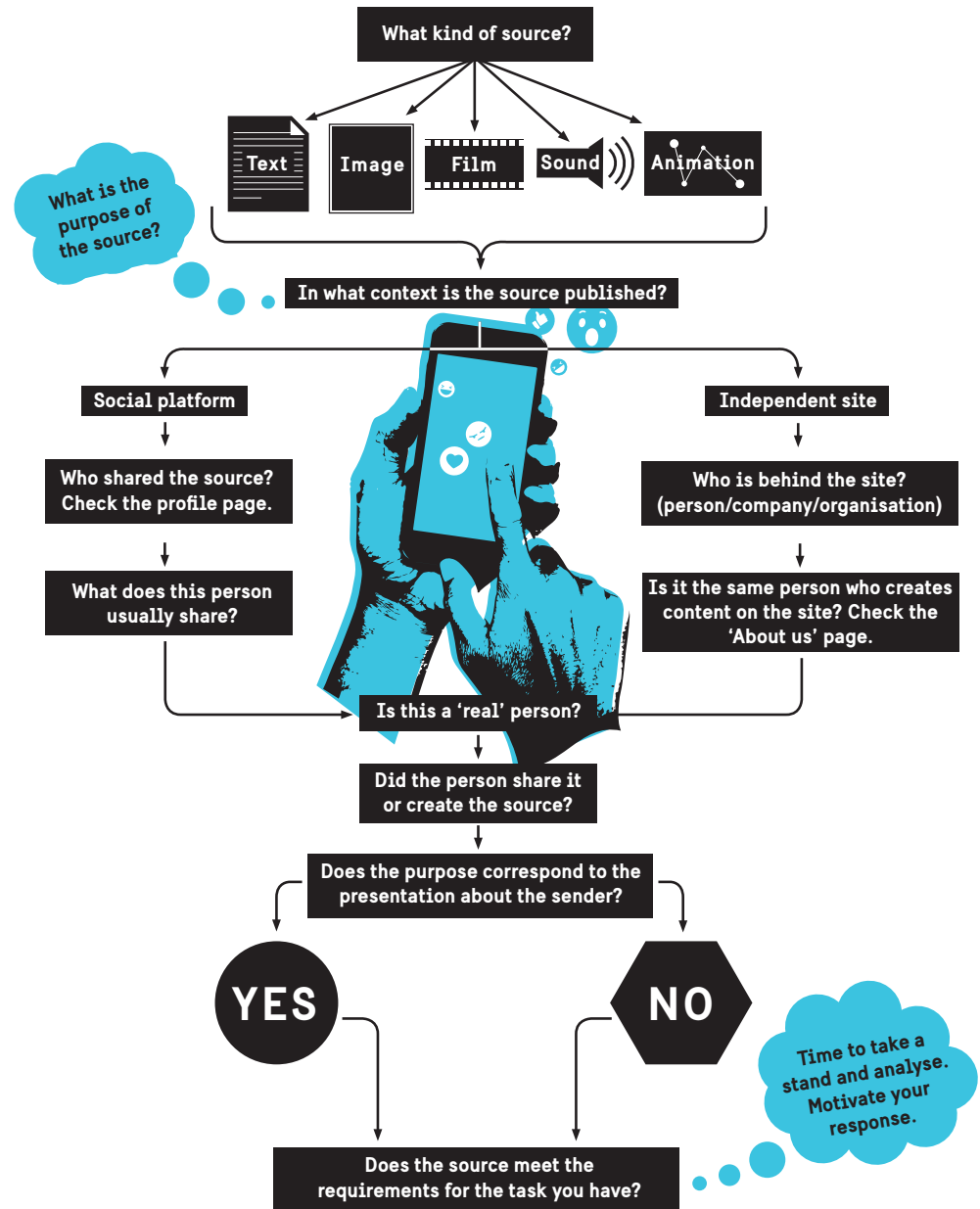
- Why is it important to find out who owns a domain?

- Who owns the domain name: www.blogspot.com? How do you find out?

- Who is responsible for what is on a website? Is it the domain owner or the person who writes the content?

### Exercise 6: How come Wikipedia ranks so high on Google?

What influences how high a site ranks on a google search? Ask your students and summarise the results.

What kind of source?

Text    Image    Film    Sound    Animation

What is the purpose of the source?

In what context is the source published?

Social platform

Independent site

Who shared the source? Check the profile page.

Who is behind the site? (person/company/organisation)

What does this person usually share?

Is it the same person who creates content on the site? Check the 'About us' page.

Is this a 'real' person?

Did the person share it or create the source?

Does the purpose correspond to the presentation about the sender?

YES    NO

Time to take a stand and analyse. Motivate your response.

Does the source meet the requirements for the task you have?

Factors that determine where a website ends in
a google search:

● Links to/from the website

● Keywords

● Your previous searches

● Google's algorithms

● Ads

Discuss with your students why Google often has Wikipedia
among the top ten results. How does it affect our way of
looking at Wikipedia? How does it affect our way of looking
at Google?

How important is it for a site to be ranked high in a google
search? Does it increase the credibility of the site? How?
Discuss our search behaviour, the importance of certain
keywords, Google's business model, and paid-for links.

## LESSON TWO

# PROPAGANDA

### TEACHERS' RESOURCES

Time for lesson number two. Now that your students have grasped how to regard sources critically, we will look at how different techniques that involve language, imagery and sound are used to push people's opinions, values and actions in a particular direction. We're talking about propaganda. Introducing students to the techniques will enable them to become better at interpreting and decoding propaganda messages.

### Introducing the propaganda techniques

Propaganda techniques are used both within the democratic framework (e.g., in promoting human rights) and outside this framework.

The five propaganda techniques presented in the material are:

1. Appeal to people's emotions

2. Attack the opponent (create an 'us' and a 'them')

3. Simplify, distort and lie about facts

4. Appeal to a specific audience

5. Repeat an idea or a message

### Slideshow overview

The slideshow is divided into five parts based on these five techniques. The presentation is meant to take up two class periods on separate days. We recommend that the class is divided into groups of 3 – 4 students.

We also recommend that the class first summarise what they see in the image without any opinions or interpretations. Then talk about how they interpret the image. Note that individual associations should be avoided when we are seeking a common understanding.

The themes of the pictures may seem obvious, but everyone doesn't always see the same thing. As a teacher, you don't need to have answers to all questions that arise. Look at the pictures together, find out what you see and discuss what it makes you think about.

### Getting started

Start the PowerPoint slideshows 2.1 and 2.2 and read the script that accompanies the slides. You can read the texts in their entirety or rephrase them in your own words. Texts in brackets are for your own information as the teacher.

# LESSON THREE

**3**

# MAKING A FILM

## TEACHERS' RESOURCES

There is no better way to grasp the sometimes complex structures of biased information than through a simple learning by doing. Therefore, lesson three takes a closer look at the subject of source criticism and propaganda by letting your students create their own propaganda film, based on an article containing fake news.

If you want interaction, this exercise is very suitable. Divide students into groups of at least 4 – 6 people. Let your students post the finished videos on different social media and arrange a competition, either between the groups in your class, or between classes in your school. You can let students vote or base the competition on the number of likes.

### The assignment

You can either use the article about blackbirds attacking Kentucky (http://weeklyworldnews.com/headlines/54802/blackbirds-attack-kentucky/), or choose another article that you prefer. You can visit https://www.snopes.com/category/facts/fake-news/ or http://weeklyworldnews.com/ for suggestions, or you can write your own fake article. The article should contain a threat to the public. We recommend you choose something harmless and non-political. The information source should be unknown to your students.

Let the students read the article you have chosen. The students' assignment is to convey what could happen if no one deals with the problem described in the article.

Ask them to follow the film recipe described below and make their propaganda film as effective as possible.

### #ChallengeYourFacts

Part of the #ChallengeYourFacts competition? Select one of the films to represent your school. Share it on social media with the hashtag #ChallengeYourFacts. Don't forget to add the name of your school.

#ChallengeYourFacts

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**Recipe for propaganda film**

1 film – approximately 4 class periods.

The schedule below is only a suggestion. Feel free to plan the filmmaking in any way you prefer.

**Class period 1:** Read the article, explain the assignment and introduce the film recording and film editing app.

**Class period 2:** Planning and recording/downloading from web.

**Class period 3:** Editing in the film app.

**Class period 4:** Presentation of finished films and discussions.

*We recommend that you hand out paper copies of the assignment on pages 14 – 16 below to each group.*

**Questions for discussion after assignment**

Questions in connection with the screening of the student films.

● Can you find any of the propaganda techniques in the film (appeal to emotions, us and them, simplify and slant, address a specific audience)?

● Were the witnesses believable? Why/why not?

● Did the still images from the web add to the message of the film? Why/why not?

● Did the graphs or diagrams add to the message? Why/why not?

● Did the music and sound effects add to the message? Why/why not?

● How could the message of the film have been made stronger?

● If you wanted to repeat this message to as many people as possible, how would you go about it?

## LESSON THREE

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# MAKING A FILM

### EXERCISE

**Ingredients**

1 tablet or smartphone

1 app for film editing

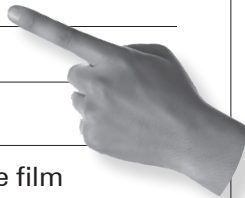Access to library of free sound effects and music (e.g. https://www.jewelbeat.com/)

2 'witness' actors who can describe what happened

1 'expert' actor who can talk about the event

10–15 still images from the web

1 narrative voice

1 fake news article

1 symbol to represent the sender of the film (you and your agenda)

### Instructions

**1** Read the article and identify the threat. Who is the scapegoat in the article? Then determine what makes people among the public afraid of the scapegoat.

**2** Select two people to act as witnesses. Write down a few short sentences for them to say. Use quotes from the article or make up your own.

**3** Select one person to act as an expert. Write down a few statements for him or her to read. Use quotes from the article or make up your own.

**4** Choose sentences from the article or add your own to be used for the narrative voice.

**5** Find appropriate stills from the internet. Pictures of the scapegoat, damage, images for setting the mood, etc. Make sure you don't use copyright-protected images. Search for Creative Commons pictures that you can use.

**6** Search for diagrams and graphs you can use to support your statement. The diagrams don't have to relate to the subject matter.

**7** Draw your symbol – the image that represents you as the sender. Either draw it using an app or draw it on paper and take a photo of the drawing.

**8** Use the camera on your phone or tablet to film the two witnesses and the expert. Follow the instructions from the storyboard (see below).

**9** When you are finished, import all images and film clips to the timeline in the film editing app. Place the material on the timeline, following the same order as in the storyboard.

**10** Decide for how long each still image will be shown. Between 1 and 4 seconds is usually a good length of time depending on what tempo you want for the film.

**11** Place your symbol at the end.

**12** Record the narrative voice either directly in the film editing app or record it separately and import it to the timeline.

**13** Choose some dramatic music to enhance the threatening and menacing mood. Sites for sounds include www.jewelbeat.com, www.incompetech.com and www.findsounds.com. Add the sounds and music to the timeline.

**14 Finished!**

### Storyboard

A film consists of many different components. Below is a suggested storyboard to help visualise the film-making process.



**Eyewitnesses outdoors**
Record the film sequence with witnesses outdoors. Film these persons from the waist up. Be sure to keep your recording device still. Let the camera run for three seconds before and after the witnesses speak to make sure all the dialogue is included. Hint: If the person being interviewed is looking to the side of the camera instead of straight into it, this gives the illusion that an interviewer is also present.
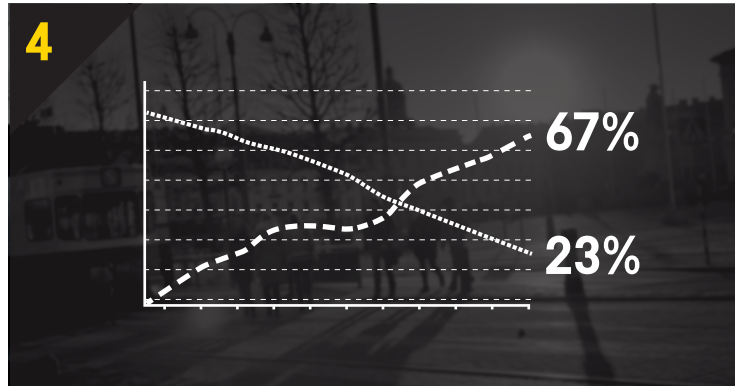


**Still images**
While editing, insert some of the still images next to each other on the timeline and decide for how long they should run (1–4 seconds approximately).



**Expert indoors**
Record the film sequence with the expert indoors, preferably in an office environment. Film the person from the waist up. Be sure to keep your recording device still. Let the camera run for three seconds before and after the witnesses speak to make sure all the dialogue is included.

**4**



**Diagrams and graphs**
While editing, insert some of the still images of diagrams and graphs next to each other on the timeline and decide for how long they should run (1 – 4 seconds approximately).

**6**



**Back to eyewitness**
Add one last comment from one of your witnesses. Feel free to finish with a question, for effect.

**5**



**More still images**
Add the rest of your still images to the timeline.

**7**



**Logo**
Add the still image of your symbol last in the film.

**8**

**Music and sounds**
Add dramatic music and sound effects.

# MATERIAL CONTRIBUTED BY

**Webbstjärnan & the Internet Foundation in Sweden (IIS)**
Webbstjärnan (The Web Star) is an initiative from the Internet Foundation in Sweden (IIS) that seeks to improve and safeguard internet usage by schools, teachers and students. Its task in supporting schools in this area is to enable educators to feel secure in their use of the internet as a tool for publishing and creating school work and for creating websites.

**Viralgranskaren**
Viralgranskaren (The Viral Scrutineer) is a fact-checking initiative at the Swedish newspaper Metro. They check viral claims and promote improved critical thinking online among the public. In 2014, its first year, the initiative won The Swedish Grand Prize for Journalism in the innovation category. In 2017 Viralgranskaren instituted a national day of critical thinking to get more people to recognise fake stories and propaganda. In connection to the event they released free school material for teachers.

**The Swedish Media Council**
The Swedish Media Council is a government agency whose primary task is to promote the empowering of minors as conscious media users and to protect them from harmful media influences. The Council produces information and pedagogical material to be used by parents, educators and people who meet children and young people in their profession. The Media Council also both monitors and publishes reports and other material on developments in the media, media effects and the media situation of children and young people.

**Swedish Institute**
The Swedish Institute is a public agency that encourages interest and confidence in Sweden around the world. The Swedish Institute operate in the fields of culture, education, science and business in seeking to strengthen ties and promote development.

# AVAILABLE MATERIAL



Poster (70x100 cm)



Folder A4



PowerPoint



Social media banner
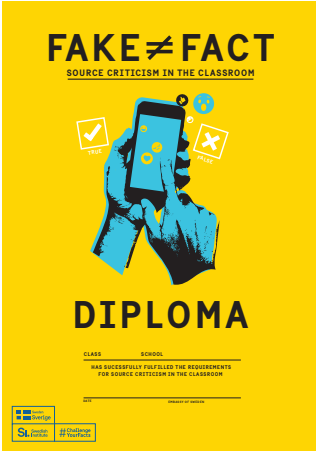


Diploma

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