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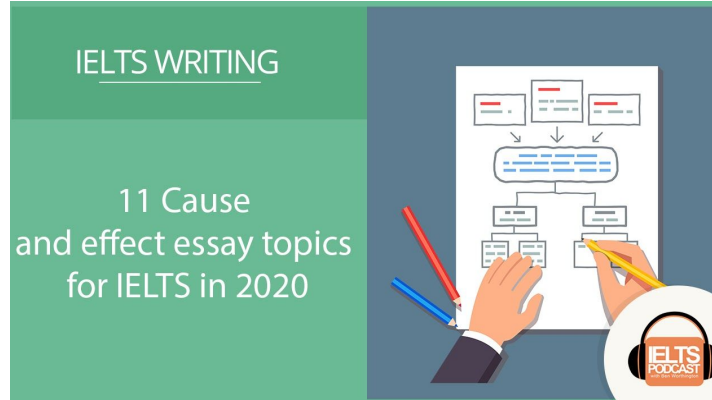
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INTRODUCTION

Ellen: Hello, everyone. This is Ellen and I am back today with another tutorial about [IELTS writing](#). In today's tutorial, I want to talk about [Task 2](#) and I want to talk about a specific type of Task 2 question that we do see from time to time. At this point in your preparation, I imagine that a lot of you know some of the different types of questions that come up over and over again. You can pretty much categorize the questions into different question types.

So, we've got to what extent do you agree or disagree. We have discussed the advantages and disadvantages. We have discussed both views and give your opinion and then we have a wide

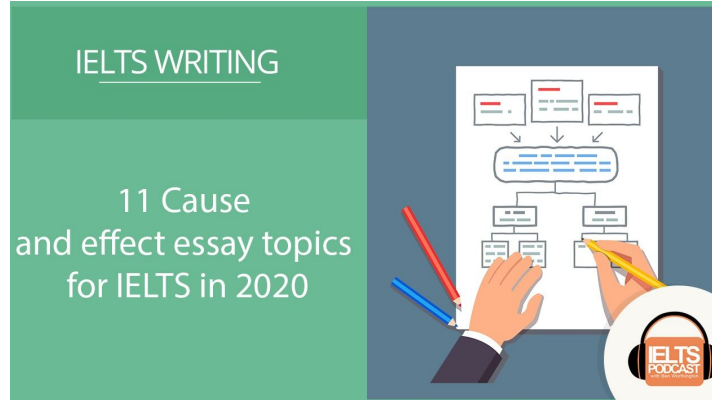


variety of two-part questions. That's what I'm going to focus more on today. So, within that general category of two-part questions, there are a ton of different types of questions even within there. Very often, we see problem-and-solution questions and occasionally, we also see cause-and-effect questions.

This last type I should say is a different type of question and it's an interesting type of question because from my experience, I see that some people miss-read these questions maybe because they're stressed, maybe because they're used to practicing a different type of question more, but for whatever reason, people sometimes like I said miss-read or they misinterpret the question and what is actually a cause-and-effect question they answer as a problems-and-effects or a problem-and-solution. So, they kind of mix these question types up.

I kind of understand it, but again, I think it's something that can be easily solved if with a clear head you just spend a couple of minutes looking at the question, okay? So, what kinds of questions might you see in a cause-and-effect question and how does the language of those questions differ from one of those other two-question type of questions?

Well, first of all, the wording actually varies quite a bit even within this question type. Doing some research on the Internet and through some of my own files from students who have

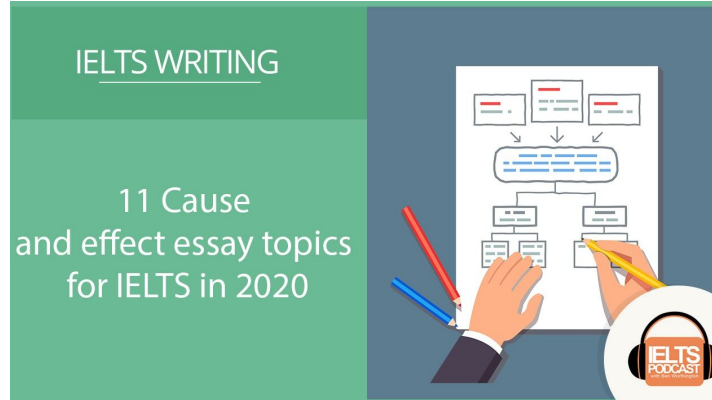


taken the exam and who have had this type of a question before, there is a variety of language that can be used and so that kind of confuses a little bit. It's not like the questions are always asked with exactly the same language.

So, that's another reason why you have to be really, really conscious and aware and really spend some time to ask yourself like okay, have I truly understood this question? Do I understand what they are asking me for? You have to make sure that you carry that question with you throughout the essay.

Okay. So, like I said, occasionally cause-and-effect questions can be confused with these other question types. So, cause-and-solution is another type and as I said before, problem-and-solutions can sometimes be confused. So, let's look at one typical type of question regarding child obesity. So, one recent question I found was this: More and more children are becoming obese. What are the causes of this and what are the effects?

Okay. So, it's very easy for someone to say okay, we're talking about problem obesity. This is the problem and now I'm going to talk about the solutions, but again, that is absolutely not what the question has asked. It's asking you what are the causes for childhood obesity? So, that's the first thing you have to analyze; the causes of childhood obesity. Why are children in

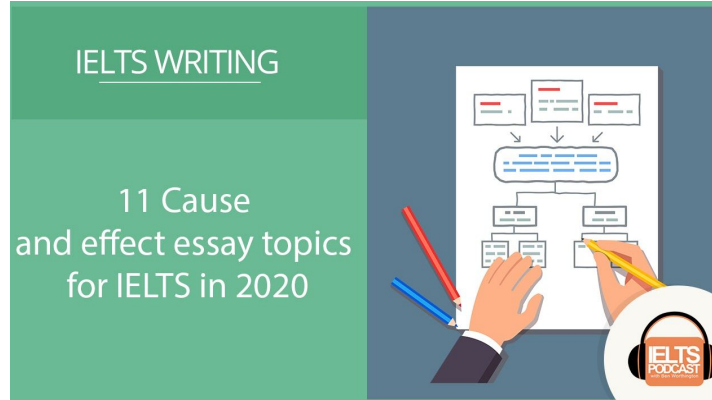


the world getting heavier and heavier and then what are the effects of this? What are the effects of childhood obesity, okay?

So, you can see it's really quite different and I would have to say even more specific than discuss this problem and then give me some solutions. So, it's really, really important to make sure that you understand the question and that you were answering the question that has been asked, okay? So, that is one example here.

Another question example that I have seen is regarding throwaway societies. The question was nowadays we have become a throwaway society and then they explain it and say that we throw away devices and gadgets rather than repair them. So, why is this happening and what are the effects of this?

So, you can see here again the wording is a little different. They're not asking you what are the causes of this. They're asking you why is this happening. Essentially, it's the same question. It's the same thing as asking what the causes are, but you can see that the wording is a little different and so you have to really make sure that that's what you're answering and you're not saying, for example, this is a problem. So, again, you have to make sure that you're answering

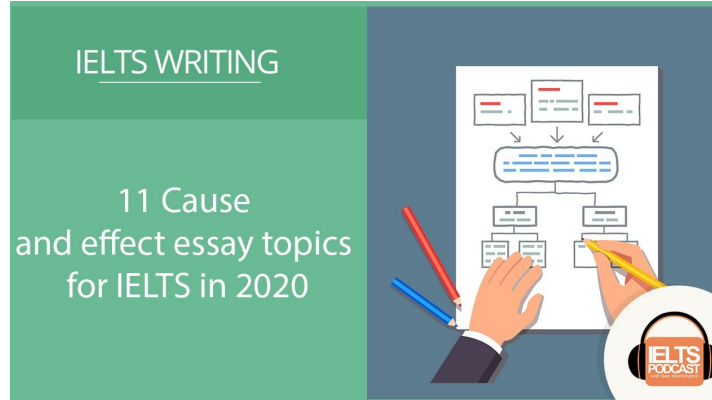


what they're asking you and not answering a different question and again, the effects of this; what results from this?

You can see that that's extremely different from say, for example, offering solutions to this, but again, you have to offer the effects. What is the effect of living in a throwaway society? Well, one clear effect is rubbish, environmental pollution; those are effects. So, make sure you understand what they're asking you and how you have to answer it.

Another recent question that I saw from one of my own students was most people spend less time at home than they used to. What are the reasons for this change and what are the effects on society and individuals? So, again they're asking you now for reasons. They're changing the wording a little bit, but in essence, the information they want is the same. Why is this happening? What are the causes of this? And then, of course, they asked for the effects.

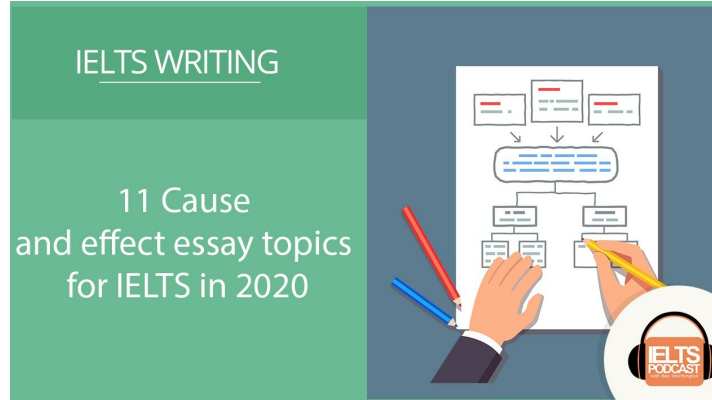
A similar question I have seen along this vein is regarding sleeping. People are sleeping less nowadays. Why is this happening and discuss the effects on society and the individual. Now, I think these last two are interesting because they don't just ask you about the effects in general, but they're asking you about specific effects. What are the effects on society; number one and number two, what are the effects on the individual?



I think these types of questions are really, really helpful because they are essentially telling you how they want you to frame your answer. They're making it so specific they're basically telling you look, this is the information we want you to give us. Now, just write your essay, okay? So, in a way, they're kind of doing you a favor. They're making your life easy by telling you how they want you to do it.

All right. So, since we've talked about four different types of these questions and how the wording can change a little bit, let's talk about how you have to organize these. There are a couple of different ways this can be done, okay? So, of course, we start off with an introduction; that's obvious and as usual, we recommend a four-paragraph structure. So, you've got your introduction, you have body paragraph 1, you have body paragraph 2, and then you would have a conclusion.

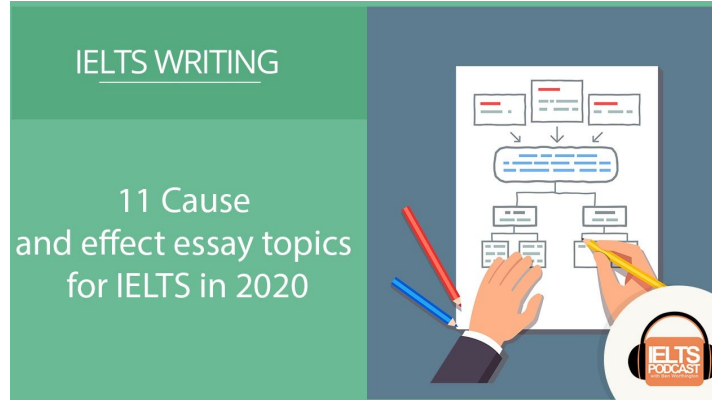
So, those of you who have heard some of my podcasts before or maybe you've heard some of my essay corrections, you have heard me talk about the importance of making your position clear throughout the response if you want a band 7 for task achievement. What does that mean? It means that whatever that command is in the question, you have to respond to it in your introduction.



So here, if they're asking you what are the causes and what are the effects, you need to give a brief answer about the causes and the effects. So, if they're asking you why more and more children are becoming obese, you may want to mention in the last sentence of your introduction our fast-paced lifestyles and modern way of life or-- our fast-paced lifestyles and move to urban centers are some of the causes for these problems and the effects are less healthy individuals and more money spent on health care, okay? So, something like that would be what you would want to say in your introduction, okay?

So, how do you organize your body paragraphs? Well, this is where you have a couple of choices to make. One obvious way to do this is to have one paragraph for the causes, all right? Now, one thing I really want to point out here is this word causes, okay? This is where I find a lot of IELTS test takers and students are getting confused. When you hear that word causes you really have to pay attention to that plural there in the word.

Causes means more than one. So, it's not enough to give just one cause. You're going to have to give at least two and I say at least two, but I think you should probably stop at two, all right, but you just need to develop them well. So, when you see that plural-- and that's a rule of thumb that you always want to keep in mind in all Task 2s-- when you see a plural causes it means you

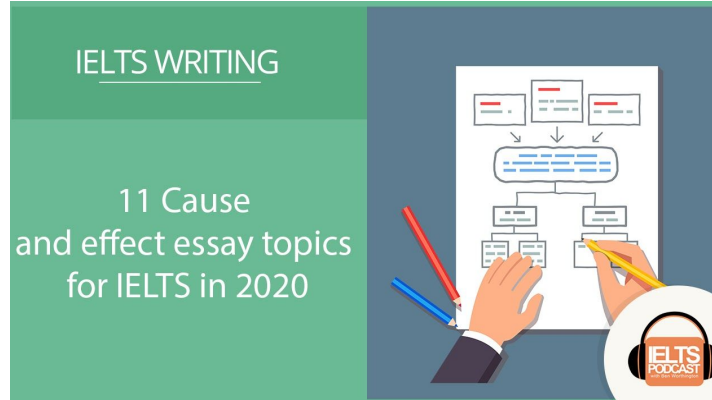


have to give more than one and the same thing is true for effects. What are the effects of this? Well, you're going to have to give more than one, okay?

So, how will you do this? Well, when you get into your body paragraph-- we've already written our introduction, we have stated our position that there are causes A and B and the effects of this issue are C and D, okay? Fine. So, we go in our body paragraph and we begin with a statement essentially telling the examiner that there are two main causes for this problem, okay?

And then you would clearly state that the first reason for this problem or the first cause is this and then the next thing that you have to do which is extremely, extremely important is to support your answer; is to support this cause. So, when you say that I believe our fast-paced way of life is one of the main causes, the next question obviously is why and that's what you have to answer.

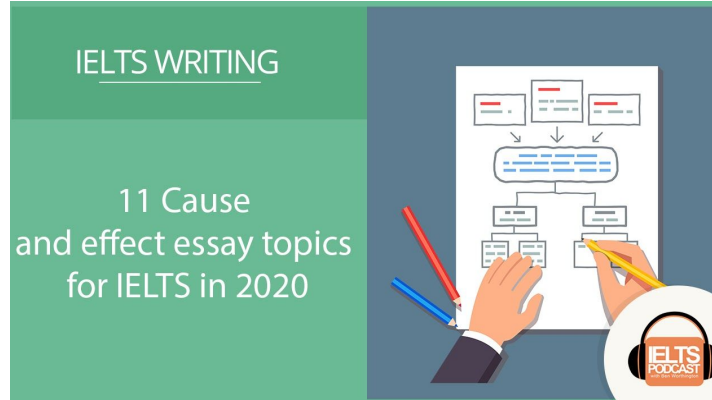
So, you're going to say why this is the case. How has our fast-paced way of life caused children to become obese? Well, that's where you're going to say children because they are overextended with their school and extracurricular obligations have no time to play outside or



be physically active. As a result of this, they are getting heavier and heavier and are leading more of a sedentary lifestyle, okay?

So, I have explained to you how this cause is a cause, why it's a cause, and why I think it's causing this problem and so I have extended it. Then as I said, it's not enough to just say that there's one cause. You have to say that there's another cause as well. So, the other cause I said in the beginning was this shift towards urbanization. So, what you could say here is that the second cause is this shift towards urbanization with more and more people living in the cities and as a result, parents are more reluctant to allow their children to play outside with friends and so as a result of this fear for their children's safety making their children stay inside. Children are playing with tablets. Children are playing with cell phones and so forth. In fact, that's another great cause that you could say as well.

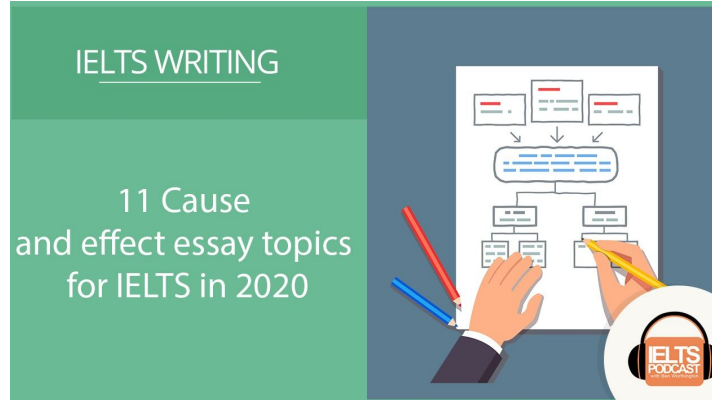
Let's say you don't like my urbanization idea, you could say that another cause is the shift towards technology and then again, you explain it. How is this a cause? So, you would say with more and more children having access to mobile phones or tablets or computers or game consoles they are less willing to play outside and they are more interested in playing these games and playing on these devices and essentially leading very sedentary lives.



So, you can see I really extended this idea. I haven't just stopped at telling you what the cause is, but I explained to you precisely how I see it creating this problem, creating this situation, okay? That's how you extend this cause part of the paragraph.

Now, of course, the next thing you have to do is shift gears and then explain what are the results of this? What are the effects of this problem? We talked a little bit about this throwaway society essay where people are throwing away devices, they're throwing away appliances and so forth rather than fixing them. So, what are the effects of this trend in our society?

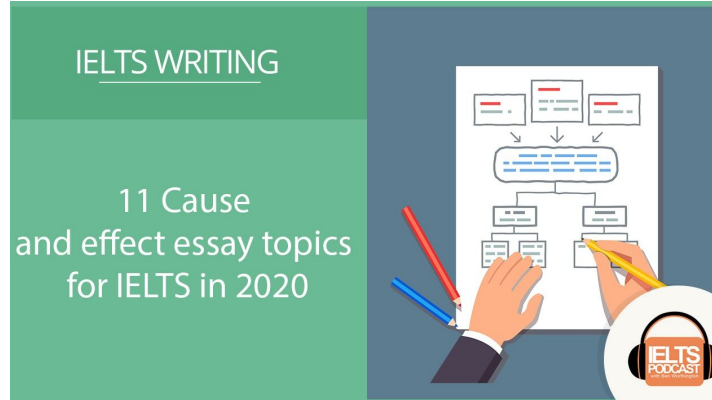
Well, one effect would be the increase of garbage in all of our landfills. So, again, then you would ask yourself well, how? How is this an effect? What does this mean? So, you extend it. We are having-- this is creating environmental pollution. We have less space for other things whether that's for natural habitats or whether it's for forests. We are taking up more and more of the earth's land for landfills creating garbage, creating possibly toxic environments because some of these appliances and devices may certainly be toxic. So, they're going into the ground, perhaps they are polluting the air as well. So, it's just creating a very, very dangerous environment.



Now, another thing that you may want to say as an effect-- there are a couple of things you could say as an effect here. You could say that some professions are dying out. So, people who used to repair these devices are no longer needed and so they're out of work. So, you can see I told you what the problem is and then I extended it. With people buying new cell phones or buying new televisions, you can't find a repair person anymore. So, that's another effect of this problem.

Another effect that we could talk about is money. So, the consumer has less and less money in his or her pocket now because they're buying new devices, they're buying new appliances all the time. The companies; the phone companies, the television companies, the stereo companies they may be getting wealthier, but the actual consumer is in fact-- has less money in his or her bank account nowadays because of this trend. We repair less nowadays and we buy more often and this in effect is costly. It's costlier in the end if you really think about it.

So, what did we do? We started off our body paragraphs with a very clear topic sentence where in the causes you would say there are a couple of-- you wouldn't use the word couple. You would use something a little more eloquent, but there are some main causes for the issue of obesity in children. Then you would state what the first one is and then you would explain how

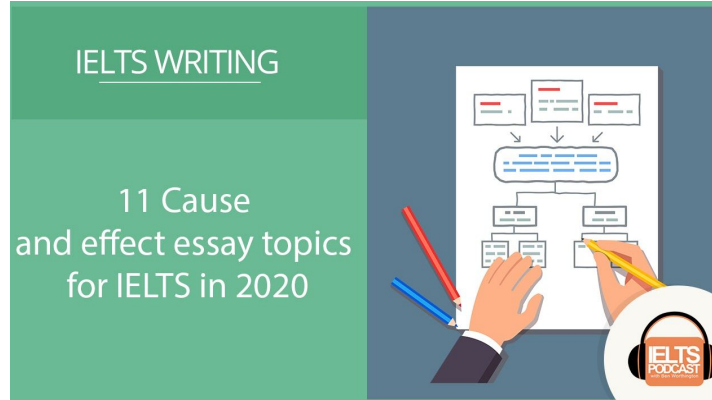


it's a problem or how it's part of the cause or why it's behind this problem. Then you would then introduce the second cause and you would do the same thing again; you would explain how this is causing this problem, all right?

Then again, you would shift gears when you go into your effects paragraph. You would say the effects of this situation are twofold, for example. You would say firstly, this is the result of this situation and then you would explain how it's a result. What does this mean? You would explain this result going into a little depth because remember in task achievement, they really want you to fully develop the topic and the better you can do that and the more completely you can do that, the higher your task achievement score will be. It's about supporting your arguments.

One thing that I see a lot in these types of essays-- I see it a lot actually with problem-and-solution essays, but I do see it with these as well is I see paragraphs that look like lists. So, one effect is this. Another effect is this. A third effect that we often see is this. Sometimes the language is lovely, it's advanced, it's got precise vocabulary etc. etc., but that's not a paragraph. That's a list.

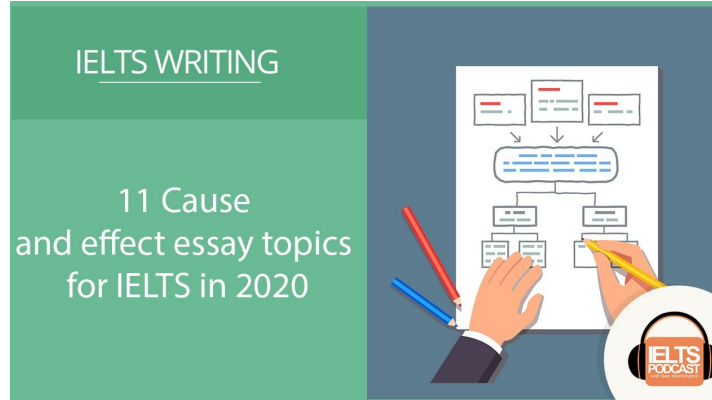
Remember what the elements of a paragraph need to be. There are several. You need to have a clear topic sentence. You need to have main ideas and those main ideas need to be supported.



Each of your main ideas needs to be supported. So, that's another point we need to come to when you have one of these causes or when you have one of these effects. Don't just assume that if you have one piece of support you're fine. No. Each one of your causes and each one of your effects needs to be supported and the most logical place to put this really is directly after that main idea. So, it should be cause 1 and then the explanation for that cause, cause 2 and then the explanation for that cause and the same thing with the effects as well.

Okay. So, after that, we go into our conclusion. We restate what the main causes were, the main effects were and then we leave the reader with a lovely thought-provoking sentence with some sort of prediction for the future. It doesn't need to be very long. Remember that in our conclusion we do not supply any new information. It is simply a reiteration of the main points of our essay. It should, in fact, look a little bit like a mirror image of your introduction. So, not too, too, too much information, but enough to really just leave the examiner with this feeling that the essay has come full circle.

Okay. So, this is how we need to deal with a cause-effect essay. The thing I really want everyone today to remember is just to spend that time understanding the question type; being absolutely certain you know what the examiner is expecting from you, what the question is asking, and



making sure that as you progress in your essay you are answering that question and you're not going off-topic to answer either problems or solutions or something which is not relevant to what you have been asked.

Okay. So, that brings us to the end of this lesson on cause-and-effect essays. I hope you have found it helpful. I would be very interested in hearing from some of you if you have had essays like this before or if there are any other types of essay questions whether it's cause-and-effect or whether it's two-question type essays or problem-and-solutions. If they've confused you, I'd be interested to hear some feedback from you.

Remember to check out the online course at ieltspodcast.com; tons of information there. The information there is extremely useful. Full, full information dealing with all different types of questions; Task 1, Task 2, and speaking, of course, reading. Everything you could possibly need, lots of different options to suit you best. So, do check that out as well. So, best of luck to all of you and until next time. Bye-bye.

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