

# The Ultimate Guide To Passing IELTS

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**G-TEC  
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ACADEMY**

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This guide provides you with the basic methods that you need. Knowing the methods is important, but you also need to practice them. gtegensmart a has exam-like practice questions to help you succeed. **Sign up for FREE at [www.gtegensmart.com](http://www.gtegensmart.com)**

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- 2 Writing Task 2
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**Arjun, Student**

I was able to achieve the desired band score. Thanks to the assistance of the academy. The teachers go out of their way to help us, especially when it comes to addressing our weak aspects. Both the teachers and the staff are trustworthy, as they sincerely guide us down the road to success.



# CONTENTS

SCORING  
WEIGHT +

1

WRITING TASK 1 (General and Academic)	CRITERIA
An examiner gives you a score (0-9) for each criterion. Your Task 1 score is an average of the 4 criteria scores. Writing Task 1 is worth 1/3 of your total writing score.	Task Achievement, Coherence and Cohesion, Lexical Resource, Grammatical Range & Accuracy.

2

WRITING TASK 2	CRITERIA
An examiner gives you a score (0-9) for each criterion. Your Task 2 score is an average of the 4 criteria scores. Writing Task 2 is worth 2/3 of your total writing score.	Task Response, Coherence & Cohesion, Lexical Resource, Grammatical Range & Accuracy.

3

SPEAKING	CRITERIA
The Speaking test consists of 3 Sections, and takes between 11-14 minutes. An examiner gives you a score (0-9) for each criterion. Your final Speaking score is an average of the 4 criteria scores.	Fluency and Coherence, Lexical Resource, Grammatical Range & Accuracy, Pronunciation.



# CONTENTS

SCORING  
WEIGHT +

4

Listening	CRITERIA	
The Listening section consists of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 4 Sections</li> <li>○ 40 Questions</li> <li>○ 40 Points</li> <li>○ ~30 Minutes</li> </ul>	Band	Score
	5	16
	6	23
	7	30
	8	35

5

READING	GENERAL		ACADEMIC	
The Reading section consists of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 3 Sections</li> <li>○ 40 Questions</li> <li>○ 40 Points</li> <li>○ ~60 minutes</li> </ul>	Band	Score	Band	Score
	4	15	5	16
	5	23	6	23
	6	30	7	30
	7	34	8	35





# WRITING TASK 1

GENERAL

In the General **IELTS**, your Writing Task 1 is a **INTRODUCTION** letter. You'll be presented with a situation and have to write a response in the form of an informal, semi-formal or formal letter.

## INFORMAL LETTER

**Informal letters** are usually to a friend or someone you know very well. The letter must be written in the correct style with a chatty friendly tone.

### Example question:

You have recently started working for a new company.  
Write a letter to an English-speaking friend.  
In your letter:

- Explain the reasons why you changed jobs.
- Describe your new job.
- Tell him/her your other news.



**Want to improve your writing skills? The Writing Intensive Package** is a good fit. It comes with a bundle of writing assessments that are marked by our expert teachers, giving you detailed feedback on how well you responded to each question type and how you can improve.



## ● SEMI-FORMAL LETTER

**Semi-formal letters** are sent to people that you do not know well. They are more polite than an informal letter and are written in a neutral style.

### Example question:

You are working for a company. You need to take some time off and want to ask your manager for permission.

Write a letter to your manager.

In your letter:

- Explain why you want to take time off.
- Give details of the amount of time you need.
- Suggest how your work could be covered while you are away.

## ● SEMI-FORMAL LETTER

**Formal letters** are sent to a person you don't know. Examples of situations that require formal letters are: complaining about a company's product or service, requesting information, contacting the local council, or applying for a job.

### Example question:

On a recent holiday you lost a valuable item. Fortunately, you have travel insurance to cover the costs.

Write a letter to the manager of your insurance company.

In your letter:

- Describe the item you lost.
- Explain how you lost it.
- Tell the insurance company what you would like them to do.



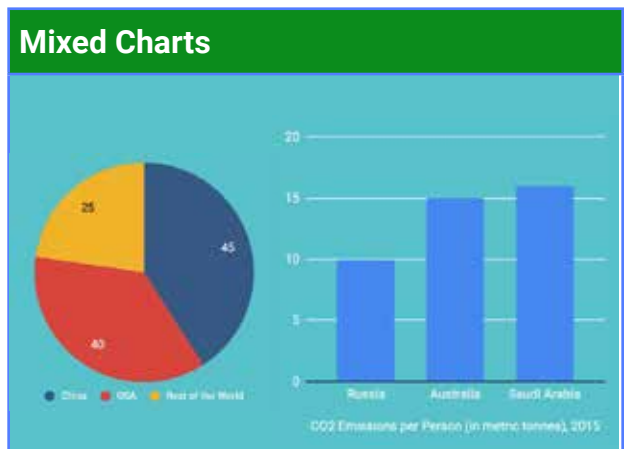
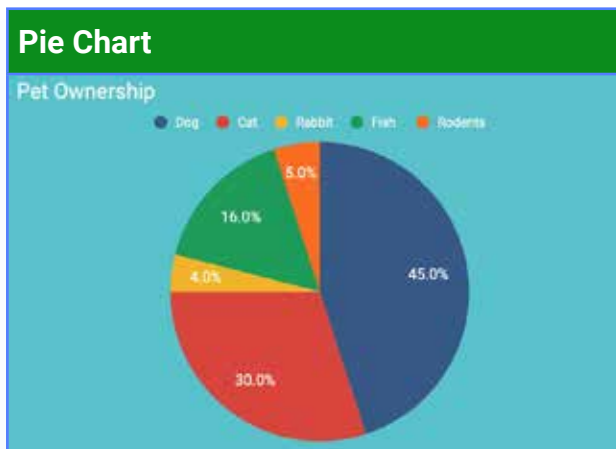
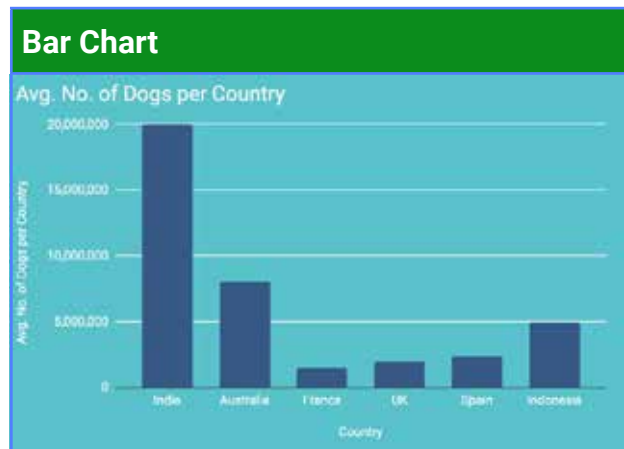
# WRITING TASK 1

ACADEMIC

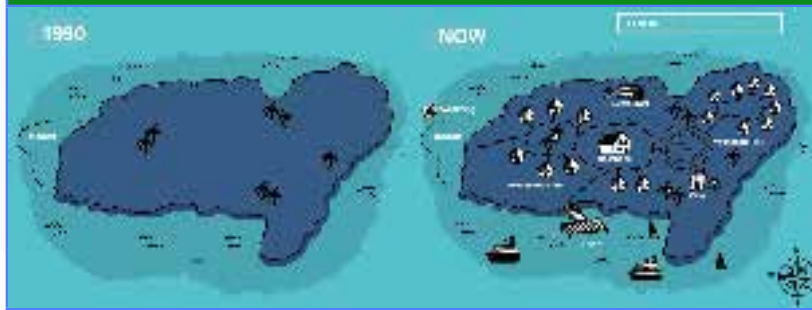
If you're doing the Academic version in your Task 1, you're given a graph, table, chart or diagram to describe. Your job is to describe the given charts, including the most important and relevant parts.

## TASK TYPES

In the exam you should expect to analyse one or more of the following charts:



## Maps



## Process/Diagram



## Tables

Carbon dioxide (CO <sub>2</sub> ) emissions (in billion metric tons)					
	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
Africa	1	1.3	1.5	1.7	1.9
USA	4.6	4.3	4.7	5	5.2
Asia	5	7.2	10.3	12	14
Europe	7.3	7.5	6	5.1	4.1
Total	20	24	29	31	35

**1/3**  
score

**150**  
words

**20**  
mins

## DO'S AND DON'TS OF ACADEMIC WRITING TASK 1

In the exam you should expect to analyse one or more of the following charts:



- Include an overview (describing the main trends, stages or differences)
- Describe the key features; the most significant things you notice
- Use data (if included in the task) in your description



- Don't describe every single detail
- Don't use lists or bullet points (make sure you write in full sentences)
- Don't speculate or make predictions  
(eg: don't explain the trends, just describe them!)
- Don't include irrelevant detail





# WRITING TASK 2

Writing Task 2 is worth 2/3 of your Writing score. You must write at least 250 words and you should spend around 40 minutes on it. You should follow normal essay writing conventions; include an introduction, body paragraphs and a conclusion, and write in an academic/neutral style. It's important to read the essay topic carefully and write a full and relevant response. If you miss the question slightly, or write off topic, you'll lose a stack of points!

## LIST OF ESSAY TOPICS

For Writing Task 2 you must **be prepared to write about a wide range of topics.**

Here is a list of common topics;

- Animals
- Art
- Communication
- Crime
- Culture/Society
- Education
- Entertainment
- Environment
- Family
- Food & Farming
- Global Issues
- Health
- Media
- Money
- Science
- Technology
- Space
- Sport
- Transport
- Travel
- Work



**Want to improve your writing skills?** The **Writing Intensive Package** is a good fit. It comes with a bundle of writing assessments that are marked by our expert teachers, giving you detailed feedback on how well you responded to each question type and how you can improve.

## QUESTION TYPES

In our IELTS course on [alisonsglobal.com](http://alisonsglobal.com), we break the essay questions into 8 types:

1. To what extent do you agree or disagree?
2. What is your opinion?
3. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages?
4. Do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages?
5. Discuss both views
6. Discuss both views and give your opinion
7. Discuss the problems and solutions
8. Double question

## EXAMPLE ESSAY QUESTION

**You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.**

**Write about the following topic:**

As a result of deforestation and illegal hunting, many animal species are becoming endangered and some are even facing extinction.

Do you think it is important to protect animals?

What can be done to deal with this problem?

**Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.**

**Write at least 250 words.**

**Be sure to answer all parts of the question!**

## QUESTION TYPES

Use this framework to build your essay.

**Introduction:** Neutral background statement about topic Rewrite the question  
Tell reader main idea of Body 1 & 2 and your opinion

**Body Paragraph 1:** Topic sentence  
Reason  
Example/evidence  
Summary

**Body Paragraph 2:** Topic sentence  
Reason  
Example/evidence  
Summary

**Conclusion:** Broad statement about topic  
Summary + opinion

**1/3**  
score

**150**  
words

**20**  
mins



Express: Are you seeking detailed feedback on how to improve your speaking? The **Speaking Intensive Package** would suit you. Designed to enhance your speaking skills and improve your speaking score with detailed feedback from our Expert Teachers.time.



# WRITING TIPS

## COMMON QUESTIONS (and expert answers!)

### 1. Can I write in capital letters?

In the paper-based test, yes you can. Just be sure that you don't mix up capitals and lower-case letters randomly. For the computer-delivered test, you should **not** write in all capitals. Follow normal capitalisation convention.

### 2. What's the maximum number of words I can write?

There's no maximum. We recommend writing under **300 words** so that you minimise errors and have plenty of time to edit your work carefully.

### 3. Should I count my words on test day?

If you think you're under the word limit, it would better to use that time to write more! While you prepare for the test, **make sure you know what 250 words in your handwriting looks and feels like**. In computer-delivered IELTS, your word count is on the screen.

### 4. Can I say "I" in my essay?

**Yes!** If you're being asked for your opinion, you should use expressions like, "I think", "I believe" etc. Remember, part of your score comes from how clearly you express **your** opinion.

### 5. Can I invent statistics and research studies in my essay?

Yes. The examiner isn't going to verify your claims! However, inventing fake statistics isn't always the best way to support your point though so don't rely on this strategy. Sometimes a specific example or a detailed description can do a better job than providing an invented statistic.



## 6. What do I do if I don't understand the question?

If you really can't understand the question, this is going to make life very difficult! But if you're just stuck on a word or two, **use the context to try and guess the meaning.**

## 7. What if I don't know anything about the topic?

The topics are always familiar and **do not require specialist knowledge.** You're not expected to be an expert! Just draw on your own knowledge and experience like the instructions tell you. Think

**!** Do you thrive on interactive learning and need personalised feedback from a teacher? The **Alisons Training** is the way to go. It includes a One-on-one tutorial with an expert teacher, a mock test, assessments with feedback, live classes and all of our practice activities.



# IELTS SPEAKING

The IELTS Speaking section consists of three parts and it takes between 11 and 14 minutes. You're assessed on 4 criteria: your fluency and coherence, lexical resource (vocabulary), grammatical range & accuracy, and pronunciation.

## **PART 1**

- 4-5 minutes
- 2-3 topics
- Approximately 11 questions

In Part 1, **questions are personal and simple.**

The test always starts with 3-4 questions about:

a) where you live

or

b) what you do (for work or study)

Next, there will be 4 more questions on a completely different topic. The questions

can be about sport, travel, cooking, TV, mobile phones... anything!

This is followed by 4 final questions on another topic.

**Need help with speaking or want to work on pronunciation? Sign up today and book a 1:1 Tutorial with us!**

**ACADEMIC**

**GENERAL**



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## **PART 2**

- 3-4 minutes
- 1 minute preparation
- 2 minutes to talk on a given topic

In Part 2, the examiner will read some instructions, give you a pen, some paper and a task card or booklet. You will then have 1 minute to read the topic and make notes if you wish.

When the examiner asks you to begin, you should speak for 2 minutes (until you're asked to stop).

When the examiner stops you, he/she may ask 1 or 2 follow-up questions to finish this section. Just give short answers to these.

## **PART 3**

- 4-5 minutes
- Approximately 5 questions relating to part 2

In the final part of the test, the examiner will ask you some more questions.

**The topics here will always be connected to your Part 2 speech.**

Part 3 allows you to discuss more abstract ideas and issues.

So, if your talk was about a favourite teacher, your Part 3 will probably be all about education in general. e.g. What is the best age for children to start school? What qualities does a good teacher need?)

# SAMPLE IELTS SPEAKING TEST

Quick Tip: Use your phone to record your responses. Listen back and do it again!

## PART 1

**Let's talk about where you're from.**

Are you from a small town or a big city?

What can people do for fun there?

Do you think you will live there in the future?

**Let's talk about shopping.**

Do you enjoy shopping?

What was the last thing you bought for yourself?

Do you prefer small stores or big ones?

Have you ever bought something online?

**Let's talk about languages.**

How many languages do you speak?

How did you first learn English?

Is reading a good way to learn a language?

Would you like to study another language in the future?



## **PART 2**

**Describe a website or app you often use.**

You should say:

what it is...

how often you use it...

why you use it...

and explain whether you would recommend it to others.

## **PART 3**

**Let's talk about the internet.**

Do you think children these days spend too much time online?

How has the internet had a positive impact on education?

Have there been any negative impacts?

How important is it for governments to monitor online activity?

How do you think the internet will affect communication and relationships in the future?

# SPEAKING TIPS

## **Tip 1: Extend your answers.**

Even if the question is very simple like, 'Do you like cooking?', you should always try to extend your answer. Here are 3 ways to do this:

1 ) **Give reasons and examples:** I don't mind cooking but it's not my favourite thing in the world. Actually, I'm not very good at it so that's probably why. I can't cook much besides noodles and pasta to tell you the truth.

2 ) **Compare past and present:** I used to absolutely hate it but I did a short course in cookery after high school and that really awakened a passion in me. These days, I can happily spend all weekend looking at recipes and cooking meals for the week.

3 ) **Compare yourself with other people:** Most people find cooking a bit of a chore but personally, I love it. I find it really rewarding, especially when I prepare something special for a friend's birthday or something like that.

## **Tip 2: Record yourself**

When you practice, record yourself on your phone and listen back. Are you speaking machine-gun fast? Or do you sound like a robot? Were your verbs in the right tenses? Use your recording to work on your problem areas.

### **Tip 3: Use what you know**

You're not expected to be an expert on any topic but it certainly helps if you've read or heard something about it before. You can always say something like, 'Well, I don't know much about this but I heard a podcast the other day about this topic and the host said that...'

**Perfect your pronunciation?** Want help with your fluency and coherence? Or do you want to learn something new about grammar and vocabulary? Sign up to Prep and learn from the best!



# IELTS LISTENING

The Listening section of the IELTS test is divided into 4 sections, each with 10 questions so 40 questions in total. The test takes around 30 minutes and if you're doing paper based IELTS, you get an extra 10 minutes to transfer your answers to an answer sheet.

## **SUMMARY OF LISTENING TEST**

There are **4 sections** to the IELTS listening test. Each section is about a different topic and gets increasingly more difficult.

**Section 1** is usually an informal dialogue in a social or everyday situation. For example, it could be a conversation about opening a bank account, or someone inquiring about accommodation or a training course.

**Section 2** is usually a non-academic monologue. This could be one person giving information on something such as a guided museum tour, information about a conference or tourist information.

**Section 3** is a discussion (between 2-4 people) related to education/training. This may be a discussion between 2 students and a tutor about a group assignment, or among a group of students talking about a project.

**Section 4** is usually a university-style lecture. This could be related to any academic topic.

## Question Types

1. Multiple Choice
2. Matching
3. Plan, Map, Diagram Labelling
4. Form, Note, Table, Flow Chart, Summary completion
5. Sentence Completion
6. Short Answer

**1st audio:** 2 speakers in a social context.

**2nd audio:** 1 speaker in a social context.

**3rd audio:** 2 - 4 speakers in an educational or training context.

**4th audio:** 1 speaker in an academic lecture.

## Things to do

1. Improve your spelling
2. Build your vocabulary
3. Do practice tests
4. Attend IELTS Live Classes
5. Broaden your audio diet  
(try listening to Talks podcast!)



# LISTENING TIPS

## **Tip 1: Read the question carefully**

You will be given some time to read the questions before each recording is played. Read them very carefully as you will hear each recording only once. As you read, **try to predict the answers and highlight key words.**

## **Tip 2: Transfer your notes to the answer sheet**

For the paper-based test, as you listen, write your answers in your test booklet and then transfer them at the end of the listening test. You will be given 10 minutes to do this. Be sure to check that you have transferred your answers correctly and **remember to check your spelling & grammar.** Be sure to answer every question. An incomplete answer sheet means an incomplete score.

## **Tip 3: Listen out for keywords**

Don't worry if you don't understand everything you hear. **Listen out for the keywords** from the questions and focus on what you need to be listening out for.

## **Tip 4: Don't look back!**

Use every pause in the test to **look ahead at the upcoming questions** and prepare for them. If you miss a question, don't dwell on it because you may miss the answer to the next one. Keep moving forward!

### **TIP 5: PAY ATTENTION TO WORD COUNT**

Make sure you **follow the word count** in the instructions of each question. For example, if the instructions say, “write no more than one word” and you write “the train” instead of “train”, your answer will be marked as incorrect.

### **TIP 6: GIVE IT A GO!**

There is no negative marking, so you will just get a zero for an incorrect or incomplete answer. This means if you aren't sure of your answer, **there's no harm in guessing!**





# IELTS READING

GENERAL + ACADEMIC

In the Reading section, you have one hour to answer 40 questions. In Academic IELTS, these questions relate to 3 long texts (700-1000 words each) while in General IELTS, there are 3-4 small texts and 1 long text. The Academic and General sections differ in subject matter but both require the same skills and include the same question types. Specialist knowledge of the subjects covered is not required to successfully answer the questions. You can learn everything you need by reading the text and questions you're given.

**Here is a list of the different tasks you might see in the reading section:**

## 1. MATCHING QUESTIONS

There are 4 different forms of Matching questions. They all involve reading the given text and matching it with a corresponding answer. The 4 different types of Matching questions are:

- Matching Information
- Matching Heading
- Matching Features
- Matching Sentence Endings

## 2. MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

In this type of question, you need to choose the best answer from four alternatives (A, B, C or D), or the best two answers from five alternatives (A, B, C, D or E), or the best three answers from seven alternatives (A, B, C, D, E, F or G).





### **3. IDENTIFY QUESTIONS**

These questions require you to read statements and decide whether they are true or false according to the text. If there is no information or it's impossible to know, the answer is Not Given. Yes / No / Not Given questions are similar but the statements are based on the writer's opinion rather than on facts.

**True / False / Not Given**

**Yes / No / Not Given**

### **4. COMPLETION QUESTIONS**

These are similar to traditional gap-fill questions. The instructions will ask you to either select words from the text or to select from a list of answers. Where words have to be taken from the passage, the instructions will make it clear how many words/numbers you should use. e.g. 'NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER from the passage' or 'ONE WORD ONLY'.



# THE 3 ESSENTIAL READING STRATEGIES

These are strategies you probably use in your own language and you definitely need to use them in IELTS Reading because you have a LOT of text to deal with and not much time to answer the 40 questions.

## SKIMMING

### Why skim?

Teachers will often tell you to 'skim this text' before you read. Why? Well, before you read carefully, it's helpful to know what the text is about and how it's organised. Is it a problem/solution-type text? Is it a persuasive piece? Is it a historical account? An effective skim will help you to know.

### How to skim

There are 2 ways to skim. Try both and see what works best for you.

**Skimming A:** Look (don't read!) quickly through the entire text. Notice repeated words and ideas to get an idea of the topic and organisation of information.

**Skimming B:** Read the heading/s, read the introduction, read the first sentences only of each paragraph and read the conclusion. This will show you the main points and the structure of the text.



Don't try out these strategies for the first time on test day! Come along to our live classes or jump into our course to practice them now.

## **SCANNING**

### **Why scan?**

The best way to think about scanning is hunting. You use this strategy when you're simply trying to find a name, date or specific piece of information in a text. You will use this strategy a lot when doing gap-fill or true/false/not given questions, for instance.

### **How to scan**

Don't read, just look! Reading will slow you down. Turn off your brain and just look for the relevant section. Once you find it, then you will use the third and most important reading strategy: reading carefully!

## **READING CAREFULLY**

### **Why read carefully?**

In a language test, skimming and scanning are just part of the process. When you actually need to answer questions, then you have to slow down to read carefully.

### **How to read carefully**

Imagine you're looking for an answer to a question and you've found the relevant section in the text by scanning. Now, you need to read the two or three sentences around that section. If you read too quickly, you will probably have to read again. And again. This is a huge waste of time!

Instead, practice reading at a pace where you fully understand the text the first time.

Try reading dramatically and slower than usual, emphasising important words in your head, or scribbling notes and underlining while you read.

Break the habit of returning to the start of a sentence or paragraph when you've read it.

# **READING TIPS**

## **3 Tips for IELTS reading practice**

In order to achieve a high score in the IELTS reading test, practice your reading comprehension skills using these 3 Tips:

### **Tip 1: Read Widely**

You never know what you'll get on test day, so it's a good idea to read widely as you prepare. Set yourself a reading goal and use online resources such as:

- The Conversation
- National Geographic
- The Guardian
- BBC

Work on skimming for overall comprehension, and careful reading. Not only will this improve your reading speed and general knowledge, but you'll be building vocabulary too.

### **Tip 2: Summarise paragraphs as you read**

Get into the habit of looking up after each paragraph you have read and then summarise the main idea/points in your own words in just 1-2 sentences.

This is a great way to exercise your brain, and it will greatly improve your reading speed and comprehension skills.

### **Tip 3: Keep a record of new vocabulary**

After reading an article, note down any new words you have discovered and their meaning on an Excel spreadsheet or in a notebook or on flashcards.

Then review these words every day whenever you can: before work, during your lunch break, after work, on the train, before bed (!) etc.

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