



Multimorphemic Word Reading Lessons

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Multimorphemic Word Reading Lessons

Teaching students the pronunciations and spellings of the most frequently used affixes (prefixes and suffixes) helps students read long words.

The “peel-off strategy” is one approach to doing this (Kearns & Whaley, 2018).¹ In this strategy, students read a printed word after they peel off the prefix and/or suffix. Once the word is identified, students can add back the affixes and accurately read and spell the multimorphemic word.

These resources are intended for instructors and tutors working with elementary students in Grades 3–5 who are experiencing difficulties reading long words. Unit 1 includes five lessons that focus on teaching suffixes and using the peel-off strategy to pronounce and spell multimorphemic words.

¹ Kearns, D. M., & Whaley, V. M. (2018). Helping students with dyslexia read long words: Using syllables and morphemes. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 51(3), 212–225.
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Overview of Unit 1:

Reading and Spelling Words with Suffixes

Lesson Sequence and Procedures

There are a series of activities used across Lessons 1–4 in Unit 1. First, the instructor will introduce the meanings of two new suffixes and demonstrate how to use the peel-off strategy to break orally stated words into parts. Next, students will practice using the peel-off strategy to read multimorphemic words with those suffixes. Then, students will build words with the suffixes. Finally, students will spell multimorphemic words with the target suffixes. After the lesson activities are completed, the instructor will assess students' ability to read and spell multimorphemic words in a list before reading a connected text that contains the same words.

The new suffixes introduced in the first four lessons are:

- **Lesson 1: “-ity” and “-ful”**
- **Lesson 2: “-ive” and “-en”**
- **Lesson 3: “-ment” and “-or”**
- **Lesson 4: “-ate” and “-er”**

In Lesson 5, the instructor will review the suffixes previously taught across Lessons 1–4. Students will complete the same activities as identified for the earlier lessons but will complete them with the combination of eight suffixes they have learned.

Lesson 1

Instruction and Practice Words

Suffixes “-ity” and “-ful”

1. Review Phonology
 - “activity,” “rarity,” “prideful,” “tasteful”
2. Teaching Affixes/Strategies
 - Instructor Model: “humorful”
 - Practice: “equality,” “normality,” “wasteful,” “successful”
3. Making Words
 - Instructor Model: “seniority”
 - Practice: “popularity,” “blissful,” “thoughtful,” “respectful,” “humanity”
4. Spelling
 - Instructor Model: “minority,” “faithful”
 - Practice: “wishful,” “vanity,” “legality,” “eventful”
5. Assess
 - “priority,” “dreadful,” “finality,” “oddity,” “careful,” “reality,” “cheerful,” “wonderful,” “humidity,” “forceful”

Lesson 1

Objectives:

- Given orally stated multimorphemic words with the suffixes “-ity” and “-ful,” students will be able to correctly spell the words with 70% accuracy or better.
- Given a list of multimorphemic words with the suffixes “-ity” and “-ful,” students will be able to correctly read the words with 80% accuracy or better.
- Given a text containing words with the suffixes “-ity” and “-ful,” students will be able to complete the text and correctly read the application words in it with 83% accuracy or better.

Instructor Materials	Student Materials
• Model lesson plan	• Copies of word part cards for each student
• Activity 2: Suffix cards printed and cut out	• White board and marker for each student
• Activity 3: Word part cards printed and cut out	• Reading multimorphemic words in isolation, student copy
• Spelling multimorphemic words assessment	• Lined notebook paper and pencil for each student
• Reading multimorphemic words in isolation assessment, instructor copy	• Reading multimorphemic words in connected text, student copy
• Reading multimorphemic words in connected assessment text, instructor copy	

Lesson 1

Introduction

In this lesson, students will be introduced to words with the suffixes “-ity” and “-ful.” This lesson contains multiple short activities that will reinforce identifying the suffixes and using them to read and spell multimorphemic words.

Tell students the purpose of today’s lesson:

“We will be completing activities to help us learn to read long words called ‘multimorphemic words.’ They are made up of more than one morpheme, or meaningful part. Examples of morphemes are prefixes, suffixes, and root words or base words. In each word we practice in this lesson, we will be adding suffixes.

“Suffixes are the end parts of words. The suffixes can change the meaning of the first part of the word or change how that word can be used. For example, you know that adding the suffix ‘-s’ to the end of the word ‘student’ changes it from one student to many. ‘Students’ is the plural form of the word ‘student.’ By the end of our lesson, you will be able to read and spell many more multimorphemic words.”

Build Knowledge

Teach students the two target suffixes “-ity” and “-ful.” Display both suffixes on the board and then explicitly teach them to students:

“The first suffix we will learn is ‘-ity.’ Say it with me, ‘-ity.’ The suffix ‘-ity’ tells us that the word is a noun—a person, place, or thing. It also tells us that the word is about the condition of something. Let’s look at the word ‘celebrity.’ **[Display the word ‘celebrity’ with the suffix underlined.]** If I say you are a celebrity today, I mean that you are in a state of being celebrated for something great that you did. The suffix is ‘-ity.’

“The second suffix we will learn today is ‘-ful.’ Say it with me, ‘-ful.’ The suffix ‘-ful’ tells us that the word is an adjective. An adjective is a word that describes a noun. An adjective with the suffix ‘-ful’ tells us that the word is full of something. Let’s look at the word ‘colorful.’ **[Display the word ‘colorful’ with the suffix underlined.]** This means that the butterfly has wings that are full of many colors. The suffix is ‘-ful.’”



Lesson 1

Activity 1: Listening to Words with Suffixes

Materials: None

Activity Description: In this activity, the instructor will model how to identify the suffixes “-ity” and “-ful” in a spoken word and, then, use the peel-off strategy to break a word into parts to figure out its meaning. This demonstration will help the students become aware of suffixes so they can use the peel-off strategy in later activities on spelling and reading multimorphemic words.

Begin by telling students:

“Now I am going to model how to identify the suffixes ‘-ity’ and ‘-ful’ in spoken words. Listen as I demonstrate what you will do. **[Say to the students, ‘security.’ Then, demonstrate a think aloud about how you determine if this word ends with the suffix ‘-ity’ or ‘-ful.’]**”

“Security. When I say the word ‘security,’ I am listening to the end of the word for a suffix. **[Say the word slowly, emphasizing the ‘-ity’ suffix.]** Security. I hear the suffix ‘-ity’ at the end of the word. This means the suffix on ‘security’ is ‘-ity.’”

Next, model peeling off the suffix to break the word into parts.

“Because I identified a suffix in the word ‘security,’ I can use the peel-off strategy to figure out the meaning of the words. If I remove the suffix ‘-ity’ from ‘security,’ I am left with the word ‘secure.’ There are two parts to this word: ‘secure’ and ‘-ity.’ ‘Secure’ means feeling safe. When I add the suffix ‘-ity’ to ‘secure,’ the word becomes ‘security.’ ‘Security’ can be used as a noun to describe a condition of feeling safe. For example, ‘My dog feels secure when he carries his favorite stuffed toy in his mouth on a walk.’ The toy gives him a sense of security. ‘Security’ is a condition of feeling safe.”

Lesson 1



Next, provide guided practice in identifying and peeling off suffixes with the words “activity,” “prideful,” and “tasteful.”

“Now that I have modeled how to identify the suffixes ‘-ity’ and ‘-ful’ and how to use the peel-off strategy, I want you to practice with me. I will say one word at a time. For each word, we will be listening for the suffix ‘-ity’ or ‘-ful.’ If you hear the suffix, we will then use the peel-off strategy to break the word into parts.”

If students are not able to complete the routine, use prompts such as the ones below:

- “For what suffix are you listening when you hear the word?”
- “Do you hear the ‘-ity’ or the ‘-ful’ suffix at the end of the word?”
- “How do you break the word into parts?”

If students are not successful with the prompting questions, then the instructor will need to provide additional modeling using the word “rarity.”

Lesson 1

Activity 2: Reading Words with Suffixes

Materials: Suffix cards, printed and cut out (see Activity Resources for suffix cards)

Activity Description: This activity is an application of the peel-off strategy to help students read multimorphemic words by breaking them into smaller parts.

“Now we will practice looking for our suffixes in printed words so that we can peel off the suffixes to read the words. First, let’s review identifying our suffixes in print.”

Shuffle the stack of cards so that students cannot anticipate which card you will show next. Show the cards to the students one at a time, and ask them to read the suffix on each card as soon as it is shown. If the students have difficulty reading the suffixes automatically, say the suffix, reshuffle the cards, and have students read the cards again until they are successful in reading the cards automatically.

“Now that you remember the new suffixes, let’s try using the peel-off strategy to break a long word into parts and then put the parts together to read the word. **[Display the word ‘humorful,’ but do not say it.]** If I do not know how to read this word, I want to break it into parts that I can recognize. First, I will look for one of our suffixes: ‘-ity’ or ‘-ful.’ **[Have both suffixes displayed for students to reference during the lesson.]** I know that suffixes are at the end of the word, and I see ‘-ful’ at the end of this word. **[Draw a scoop mark underneath the suffix and show that it matches the suffix ‘-ful’ you already have displayed.]** The suffix ‘-ful’ means that something is full of whatever comes before the suffix. With the suffix peeled off the word **[cover ‘-ful’ with a sticky note or temporarily erase it]**, let’s look at the word that is left. **[Display the word ‘humor.’]** I recognize this word! It is ‘humor,’ which I know means something funny. If I add the suffix ‘-ful’ back to the word, I can put the parts together to change the word to ‘humorful.’ ‘Humorful’ is an adjective that describes something or someone that is funny. Here’s an example of how to use ‘humorful’ in a sentence: ‘My little brother’s jokes are simple but humorful enough to make us all giggle at the dinner table.’”



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Next, have students practice reading multimorphemic words by peeling off the suffixes.

“It’s your turn to try finding the suffixes, peeling them off to break a word into parts, and then reading the word. If you already know the word I’m about to show you, do not say it. We want to use this to practice our strategy so that when you come across long words you aren’t familiar with, you will know what to do. **[Show the word ‘equality’ but do not say it.]**”

Guide the students in practicing the strategy with these prompts:

- “Do you see one of our suffixes on this word? What is it?”
- “What does the suffix tell us about the word?”
- “After you peel off the suffix, do you recognize the letters?”
- “Can you put the suffix together with the letters or the word to read the whole word?”
- “Using what you know about the word and the suffix, what do you think the whole word means?”

Repeat the above process with the words “normality” and “wasteful.”

If the student is not able to complete the strategy, provide additional modeling using the word “successful.”

After practicing the strategy with each word, have students read the full list of words with fluency.

Lesson 1

Activity 3: Making Words with Suffixes

Materials: Word part cards printed and cut out, with one set per student; white board and marker for each student (see Activity Resources for word cards)

Activity Description: In this part of the lesson, students will use word cards and suffix cards to create new words. The word parts are color coded, with suffixes in **purple** and words in **green**. This activity will help the students understand that multiple words can be made from the morphemes.

“We have been practicing breaking words apart by peeling off the suffixes to see the letters or the word by itself and then putting the parts back together again to read the whole word. Today, we are going to make our own words by putting the suffixes ‘-ity’ and ‘-ful’ on words that you already know. **[Show the cards.]**”

Before beginning, review the suffixes with the students.

- “Who remembers what suffixes are?”
- “Where do we find suffixes on a word?”
- “How does finding the suffixes help us with reading a long word?”
- “**[Show the suffix ‘-ity’ card.]** Who remembers what this suffix is?”
- “What does it tell us about the word?”
- “**[Show the suffix ‘-ful’ card.]** Who remembers what this suffix is?”
- “What does it tell us about the word?”

Review the words to make sure students know what they mean: “thought,” “respect,” “humid,” “bliss,” and “popular.”

“Now I am going to let you make some words using the suffixes ‘-ity’ and ‘-ful.’ **[Show the word cards, one at a time.]** Do you know what this word is? **[If the students do not know, say the word.]** Do you know what the word means? **[If the students do not know, define the word.]**”

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“You are going to use these cards to make new words by combining them with our suffixes. You may make a word and then find that it is not a real word. That’s okay. You are trying to make real words, but not every word you are trying to make will work. Some will be real words, and some may not be. You can use an online dictionary to check if your word is real. **[Review any procedures for using devices and accessing online dictionaries.]** If a word is not a real word, you will just try again.”

Model creating the multimorphemic word “seniority” with the word parts “senior” and the suffix “-ity” by saying:

“I am going to use the suffix ‘-ity’ and add it onto the end of the word ‘senior.’ **[Show students the word part cards.]** ‘Seniority’ is a noun, and it means that someone is older or higher in rank than someone else, such as being in a higher grade or being someplace longer. Here is an example of how to use ‘seniority’ in a sentence: ‘At our school, students earn privileges based on seniority such as when the upper grades get to choose their lockers before the lower grades.’”

During this practice, students should make the following real words: “popularity,” “blissful,” “thoughtful,” “respectful,” and “humanity.”

As students work, monitor and ask guiding questions:

- “Can you use what you know about the word parts to define this word?”
- “Do you need to check the online dictionary to see if that is a real word?”
- “Can the word be combined with the other suffix? Why or why not?”

If the student is not able to complete the strategy, return to modeling and create another word. If the student still has difficulty, ask the student to tell you some words that end in “-ful” or “-ity.” Create new word cards so the student can create known words.

Lesson 1

Activity 4: Spelling Words with Suffixes

Materials: White board and marker for each student

Activity Description: In this activity, model using the peel-off strategy to break a spoken multimorphemic word into parts. Then, spell the parts to form the written word. This is intended to increase the student's concentration on parts of the word as well as increase their spelling accuracy. Start by reviewing the peel-off strategy.

"Today we will be using the peel-off strategy to break a spoken word into parts so that we can spell the word. Who remembers what the peel-off strategy is? What are the steps I follow in using the peel-off strategy? What are the suffixes that we are learning to peel off? What does '-ity' tell us about the word? What does '-ful' tell us about the word?"

Model using the peel-off strategy with the word "minority."

"We have used the peel-off strategy to read words, but today we are going to use the strategy to spell words. It can be difficult to spell a long word sound by sound. To spell a word like 'minority,' I need to break it into bigger parts than individual sounds to see what I recognize. Say the word 'minority' with me: 'minority.' I remember that I can listen for my suffixes in the word. I hear the suffix '-ity' at the end of the word 'minority.' If I peel off that suffix, I have the word 'minor' left. I know that 'minor' is an adjective that means less important or less serious. I also know how to spell the word 'minor.' **[Pronounce the word slowly and then display spelling it sound by sound.]** If I add the suffix '-ity' to the word 'minor,' I make a new word, 'minority.' 'Minority' describes groups or things that are smaller than other groups or similar things. **[Display spelling the suffix at the end of the word.]**"

Have the students use this strategy to spell the words "wishful," "vanity," "legality," and "eventful."

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Guide the students in practicing the strategy:

- “Repeat the word.”
- “Do you hear a suffix at the end?”
- “Which one of our suffixes do you hear?”
- “When you peel off the suffix, what word is left?”
- “Do you recognize that word? If not, pronounce the vowel as a short vowel. If that does not work, then try to practice the vowel as a long vowel.”
- “Try spelling the word sound by sound.”
- “Now add back the suffix. Check that you have the right word by reading it.”

Provide the students with explicit praise and explicit error correction as needed. Examples of explicit praise:

- “I like how you are peeling off the suffix first and then spelling the word sound by sound.”
- “Great job, **[say student’s name]**, spelling the word correctly and then adding the suffix back to the end of the word.”

If students incorrectly peel off the suffix, provide specific error correction such as:

- “Let’s try again. The ‘-ity’ suffix is spelled with the letters ‘i,’ ‘t,’ and ‘y.’ The ‘-ful’ suffix is spelled with the letters ‘f,’ ‘u,’ and ‘l.’ ”
- “Let’s try again together. Tell me the first sound you hear in **[say the word].**”
- “What letters can represent that sound? What is the next sound you hear in **[say the word]**? What letters represent that sound? **[Continue until the word has been spelled.]**”
- “You are right. That is one way to spell the sound you hear in **[say the word]**, but in this word, the sound is represented by different letters. Can you think of other letters that represent the sound? **[If not known, provide them.]**”

If students have difficulty with the steps of this activity, then provide additional modeling with the word “faithful.”



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If students have difficulty representing the sounds in a word, provide the student a white board and marker and follow these steps:

1. Say the word for the student.
2. Practice counting out the phonemes of the word. Draw lines on a white board or paper to represent each phoneme. Have the student write the letter or letters that correspond with each phoneme.
 - Example word: “wishful”
 - The instructor says to the student, “Let’s sound out and spell the word on the white board. As you sound out the word, I am going to draw a line for each sound that you say. What are the sounds in the word ‘wishful?’”
 - Student says, “/w/ /i/ /sh/ /ful/.”
 - Instructor writes four lines on the white board for each phoneme that the student says (**e.g., _____**). “There are four phonemes in the word ‘wishful.’ Now that we have mapped out the phonemes of the word ‘wishful,’ you are going to write on the lines the letter or letters that represent each sound. **[Sound out the word wishful again and write the letter or letters that represent the sound on each line (i.e., w i sh ful).**”
3. If the student spells the word correctly, return to the spelling activity. If incorrect, repeat steps 1–2.

Lesson 1

Activity 5: Assessment of Reading and Spelling Multimorphemic Words

Materials: (see Activity Resources)

- **Spelling multimorphemic words assessment**
- **Instructor and student copies of the reading multimorphemic words assessment**
- **Instructor and student copies of the reading multimorphemic words in connected text assessment**
- **Lined notebook paper and a pencil for each student**

Activity Directions: After completing all instructional activities, assess whether the students have met the daily objectives. There are three parts to the assessment:

- **Part 1:** Spelling Multimorphemic Words
 - The student will be given a spelling task using 10 multimorphemic words: “priority,” “dreadful,” “finality,” “oddity,” “careful,” “reality,” “cheerful,” “wonderful,” “humidity,” and “forceful.”
 - The spelling test is a group-administered assessment and untimed. The criterion for the spelling test is to spell **7 out of the 10** words correctly. Students must spell both the word and suffix correctly to earn a point.
- **Part 2:** Reading Multimorphemic Words in Isolation
 - After the spelling test, students will be asked to read the same list of words that was used for the spelling test. This is individually administered. The criterion for this assessment is to read **8 out of the 10** words correctly.
- **Part 3:** Reading Multimorphemic Words in Connected Text
 - The students will read six of the assessment words in connected text. This is individually administered. The criterion is to complete the passage and read **5 out of the 6** suffixed words correctly.

Activity 2: Suffix Cards

Directions: The suffix cards below are created to use as flashcards with students. The instructor may print and cut out individual cards to create a deck of cards containing multiple copies of each suffix. Before completing the activity with students, shuffle the suffix cards so that students cannot anticipate the suffix you will show next.

ity	ity	ity	ity	ity
ful	ful	ful	ful	ful

Activity 3: Word Part Cards

Directions: The word part cards are created to be used with students. The cards are color coded: words are **green** and suffixes are **purple**. Before the lesson, the instructor will print and cut out the cards, making one set for each student. The words will be placed together in a pile separate from the suffixes. Students also should be given a white board and marker to record the words they make by combining the words and suffixes.

ity	ful
popular	bliss
senior	thought
human	respect

Spelling Multimorphemic Words Assessment

Instructor Copy (Part 1)

Activity Description: This spelling test is group administered. Before beginning, distribute a lined sheet of paper to each student. Prompt students to number their paper from 1 to 10 as there will be 10 words on the test.

General Directions:

“You are going to spell words that have the suffixes we have been learning. I will say the word and use it in a sentence. Then, you will spell the word on your paper. Do you have any questions?”

Complete the following steps for each word:

- **Step 1:** Instructor says the word.
- **Step 2:** Instructor prompts all students to repeat the word chorally to ensure that students heard the word correctly.
- **Step 3:** Instructor reads the sentence to provide a context for the word.
- **Step 4:** Instructor repeats the word and prompts students to write the word on their papers.

Scoring Directions: Students are awarded 1 point for each word spelled correctly. Both the word and suffix must be correct. The criterion for this assessment is to spell **7 out of the 10** words correctly.

(Assessment is provided on the following page.)

Spelling Multimorphemic Words Assessment

Instructor Copy (Part 2)

1. Priority [pronounce with a long “i” sound] : It was the most important thing he had to do that day, so it was the top <i>priority</i> . Priority.	priority
2. Dreadful: The weather was <i>dreadful</i> ; there was so much wind and rain that we were scared to go outside. Dreadful.	dreadful
3. Finality [pronounce with a long “i” sound] : The instructor said, “Stop,” with <i>finality</i> because that was the end of the time for the test. Finality.	finality
4. Oddity: The dog was an <i>oddity</i> because it was the only Dalmatian without spots. Oddity.	oddity
5. Careful: You have to be very <i>careful</i> when cooking on a hot stove so that you do not burn yourself. Careful.	careful
6. Reality: Sometimes we read books or watch movies that are based on <i>reality</i> because they are about events that actually happened. Reality.	reality
7. Cheerful: We enjoy seeing our friend because he is always <i>cheerful</i> and has a big smile on his face. Cheerful.	cheerful
8. Wonderful: We saw a <i>wonderful</i> show that was like nothing else we had ever seen. Wonderful.	wonderful
9. Humidity: Everything felt damp; there was a lot of <i>humidity</i> in the air. Humidity.	humidity
10. Forceful: We had to be <i>forceful</i> in pulling open the door because it was stuck. Forceful.	forceful

Reading Multimorphemic Words in Isolation Assessment

Instructor Copy

Administer this assessment to one student at a time in a distraction-free environment. This is not timed. Print one copy of the student version and one copy of the instructor version. Place the student copy in front of the student.

General Directions:

“You are going to read a list of long words that have the suffixes we have been learning. Please read out loud. Start with the word at the top of the page and continue reading down the list. Stop when you have read the last word. Ready? Begin.”

Scoring Directions: Students are awarded 1 point for each word read correctly. The criterion for this assessment is to read **8 out of the 10** words correctly.

1. priority	6. reality
2. dreadful	7. cheerful
3. finality	8. wonderful
4. oddity	9. humidity
5. careful	10. forceful

Activity Resources

Reading Multimorphemic Words in Isolation Assessment

Student Copy

Directions: Please read each word out loud.

1. priority	6. reality
2. dreadful	7. cheerful
3. finality	8. wonderful
4. oddity	9. humidity
5. careful	10. forceful

Reading Multimorphemic Words in Connected Text Assessment

Instructor Copy

Administer the following assessment to one student at a time in a distraction-free environment. This is not timed. Print one copy of the student version and one copy of the instructor version. Place the student copy in front of the student.

General Directions:

“This passage has words with the suffixes we have been learning. Please read this passage out loud, starting with the title and continuing until you have finished the passage. If you get stuck, I will help you with the word so you can keep reading. Ready? Begin.”

Scoring Directions: the criterion is to complete the passage and read **5 out of the 6** assessment words correctly and without assistance. If the student makes mistakes or needs assistance with other words in the passage, those do not count against the score. Only the six identified assessment words are counted toward the criterion.



Adding a New Letter

Adding the letter *schwa* to the English alphabet was Jerrold Foke’s idea. The schwa is an **oddy** because it looks like an upside-down “e.”

Jerrold thought that it would be **wonderful** to add a new letter to the alphabet to help people communicate with new words. To Jerrold, creating new words with the schwa was a **priority** for helping people get along and making humanity better. Hearing people tell him about their new schwa-based words made Jerrold feel **cheerful**. People created new words with the schwa, and they sent them to Jerrold. Some of the words were **dreadful**, but Jerrold’s idea of a new letter had become a **reality**.

Reading Multimorphemic Words in Connected Text Assessment

Student Copy

Directions: Please read the text out loud.



Adding a New Letter

Adding the letter *schwa* to the English alphabet was Jerrold Foke's idea. The schwa is an oddity because it looks like an upside-down "e."

Jerrold thought that it would be wonderful to add a new letter to the alphabet to help people communicate with new words. To Jerrold, creating new words with the schwa was a priority for helping people get along and making humanity better. Hearing people tell him about their new schwa-based words made Jerrold feel cheerful. People created new words with the schwa, and they sent them to Jerrold. Some of the words were dreadful, but Jerrold's idea of a new letter had become a reality.

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