

## POINT-BASED CHARACTER GENERATION

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This system allows players to build their characters to be anything they want to start out as, and allows referees to insure that their players start out equal. Credit is given to Jeff Swycaffer for presenting a system for building Traveller characters several years ago ("Plotting a Course for Choosy Players", Dragon Magazine, July 1981, p. 9–11). His system provided for modifying the rolls of the basic character generation process. The system presented here goes one step farther, allowing the player full control over designing a character, from enlistment (automatic) to mustering out benefits (purchased by character points).

The costs of the various items in this system, from characteristics to mustering out benefits, are loosely derived from the character generation tables, but with the added concept that no skill should be limited to any one (or kept from) service. Although the system is presented as a procedure to follow, from deciding characteristics to selecting a service, and so on, players may backtrack and spend character points on previous sections, or move ahead and allot character points for mustering out benefits.

Throughout this discussion, cascade skills are referenced with an asterisk (for example, \*Gun Combat)—the player should select one skill from the selection given in the **Players' Manual**.

### CHARACTER POINTS

Character points are used to build a character. With this system, a character starts out at Age 18, with a Universal Personality Profile of 777777, having served no terms, with Cr 0, no belongings and a Psi rating of 0. Beginning characters generally have 75 character points to spend on characteristics, skills, mustering out benefits, and starting cash.

The total character points the player has to build a character may vary from campaign to campaign, but between 50 and 100 points will generate characters similar to the Basic system in the Players' Manual (the sample characters presented there are redone at the end of this article). However, a referee who wants younger characters (the random generation system often causes a campaign to consist of six or seven people in their late 50's) will use fewer points.

An average campaign will use 75 points to build player characters. Random encounter groups (thugs, bandits, marines, and so on) can easily be built on 35 points (with 50 point leaders), while important patrons will probably require 100 points. Important NPCs in a campaign (sector dukes, various important nobles, merchants and military officers) may require up to 200 points. However, let common sense prevail. This system treats most weapons and weapon skills similarly, but a FGMP–15 just isn't equal to an Advanced Combat Rifle; don't let the point totals control your campaign for you.

### CHARACTERISTICS

The easiest area to use as a base is the characteristics the character will have. In addition, the player needs to decide if he or she wants the character to have psionic ability (and the referee if that system is being used). To increase characteristics, the following costs are applied (characteristic maximums are shown in parentheses):

+1 Str (15)	1 pt.
+1 Dex (15)	1 pt.
+1 End (15)	1 pt.
+1 Int (15)	4 pts.
+1 Edu (15)	3 pts.
+1 Soc (15)	5 pts.
+1 Psi (11)	5 pts.

Note that referees can permit their players to sell back characteristics (lower their value) to increase the number of character points available for purchasing other things. That is optional—take into account that a character with less than 15 *life force* (Strength + Dexterity + Endurance) may have problems in combat, and that low *experience* (Intelligence + Education) will limit the number of skill levels the character has.

The cost of Social Standing is modified by high service rank (see below).

#### AGING AND ANAGATHICS

Characters who have aged will have spent fewer points in physical (and perhaps mental) characteristics. Rather than using the aging system in the **Players' Manual** during character generation, the referee should use the point system to balance the system. The character will be balanced for comparison to other characters by points—the aging system would alter this balance by randomly subtracting items paid for. After the campaign is under way, then use the random aging system and allow the players to try and find an anagathics source. However, for this system of character generation, assume successful aging rolls.

If a player wants to play an "aged" character, or the referee is wanting aged characters, have the players sell back some of their characters' physical characteristics.

#### SERVICE SELECTION

The player should select a service for the character, bearing in mind the following homeworld enlistment restrictions:

Army	TL 6+
Barbarians	TL 3–
Belters	TL 9+
Bureaucrats	Population 4+, Law Level 1+
Diplomats	TL 4+, Law Level 1+
Doctors	TL 4+
Flyers	TL 4+, Population 4+, Atmosphere 4+
Hunters	Atmosphere 4+
Law Enforcers	TL 4+
Marines	TL 6+
Merchants	TL 9+
Navy	TL 6+
Nobles	TL 6+
Pirates	TL 9+
Rogues	TL 4+
Sailors	Hydrographic 3+
Scientists	TL 6+
Scouts	TL 9+

#### DEFAULT SKILLS

Before purchasing skills, the character's free skills are awarded. These are the "default" skills in the **Players' Manual**, and require no character point purchase. Each default skill gives skill level–0 to the character, but this is lost if the player purchases that skill later on.

Most campaigns allow the characters to select a homeworld, or the referee assigns one, rather than randomly determine the statistics of such a world. One of the problems with using the random homeworld tables with a campaign is the possibility of generating a world that is not in the campaign.

No matter how the homeworld is determined, use it and the service the player has chosen to select as many of the following default skills as applicable (a cascade skill may be selected only once—Gun Combat–0 gives level–0 in a single gun combat skill, as chosen by the player).

TL 4+	*Gun Combat-0
TL 4-10	Wheeled Vehicle-0
TL 9+	Computer-0
TL 11+	Grav Vehicle-0
Flyer	Vacc Suit-0
Marine	Vacc Suit-0
Merchant	Vacc Suit-0
Navy	Vacc Suit-0
Pirate	Vacc Suit-0
Sailor	Vacc Suit-0

## SKILL SELECTION

After purchasing characteristics and selecting a service, the player should purchase skills. Note that for every three skill levels selected, the player is considered to have served one term in the service. Remember that no character can have more skill levels than the sum of their Education and Intelligence characteristics.

Players should base their skill selections on their view of the character they will be playing. For example, a Marine will have weapon and combat skills, but probably will not have Navigation-4. The player should come up with an idea of the type of character he wants to play, and select skills as appropriate.

The costs for purchasing skills are as follows:

Sensor Ops	1 pt.	Ship's Boat	1 pt.
Admin	2 pts.	Artisan	2 pts.
Axe	2 pts.	Carousing	2 pts.
Computer	2 pts.	Cudgel	2 pts.
Electronics	2 pts.	Foil	2 pts.
Gravitics	2 pts.	Instruction	2 pts.
Jack-o-T	2 pts.	Large Blades	2 pts.
Leader	2 pts.	Medical	2 pts.
Polearms	2 pts.	Small Blades	2 pts.
Streetwise	2 pts.	Vacc Suit	2 pts.
Brawling	3 pts.	Bribery	3 pts.
Communications	3 pts.	Disguise	3 pts.
Energy Weapons	3 pts.	Engineering	3 pts.
Forgery	3 pts.	Gambling	3 pts.
Grav Vehicle	3 pts.	Handgun	3 pts.
Hovercraft	3 pts.	Intrusion	3 pts.
JP Aircraft	3 pts.	Laser Weapons	3 pts.
Lg Watercraft	3 pts.	Linguistics	3 pts.
LTA Aircraft	3 pts.	Neural Weapons	3 pts.
PD Aircraft	3 pts.	Rifleman	3 pts.
Robot Ops	3 pts.	Sm Watercraft	3 pts.
Submachinegun	3 pts.	Tracked Vehicle	3 pts.
Wheeled Vehicle	3 pts.		

Biology	4 pts.	Blowgun	4 pts.
Bola	4 pts.	Boomerang	4 pts.
Bow	4 pts.	Chemistry	4 pts.
Crossbow	4 pts.	Early Firearms	4 pts.
Equestrian	4 pts.	Forensics	4 pts.
G/H Beasts	4 pts.	Genetics	4 pts.
Herding	4 pts.	History	4 pts.
Hunting	4 pts.	Interview	4 pts.
Liaison	4 pts.	Mechanical	4 pts.
Navigation	4 pts.	Persuasion	4 pts.
Physics	4 pts.	Pilot	4 pts.
Recon	4 pts.	Robotics	4 pts.
Sling	4 pts.	Stealth	4 pts.
Steward	4 pts.	Survival	4 pts.
Tactics	4 pts.		
ATV	5 pts.	Battle Dress	5 pts.
Broker	5 pts.	Combat Engrng	5 pts.
Combat Rifleman	5 pts.	Demolitions	5 pts.
Fleet Tactics	5 pts.	Forward Obsvr	5 pts.
Grav Belt	5 pts.	HE Weapons	5 pts.
High-G Environ	5 pts.	Hvy Weapons	5 pts.
Interrogation	5 pts.	Legal	5 pts.
Mass Drivers	5 pts.	Meson Guns	5 pts.
Mortar/Howitz	5 pts.	Naval Arch	5 pts.
Prospecting	5 pts.	Recruiting	5 pts.
Screens	5 pts.	Ship Tactics	5 pts.
Spinal Weapons	5 pts.	Survey	5 pts.
Trader	5 pts.	Turret Weapons	5 pts.
Zero-G Environ	5 pts.		

## SERVICE RANKS

Ranks and promotions may also be purchased for those services where applicable. No character may have a rank number (1–6) higher than the number of terms they have served (as determined by the number of skill selections made above).

Each rank costs a number of character points equal to the rank number. The following services have ranks:

Army:	Lieutenant (1), Captain (2), Major (3), Lieutenant Colonel (4), Colonel (5), General (6)
Barbarian:	Brave (1), Warrior (2), Leader (3), Chieftain (4), Chief (5), Elder (6)
Bureaucrat:	Clerk (1), Supervisor (1), Asst Manager (3), Manager (4), Executive (5), Director (6)
Diplomat:	3rd Secretary (1), 2nd Secretary (2), 1st Secretary (3), Counselor (4), Minister (5), Ambassador (6)
Flyers:	Pilot (1), Flight Leader (2), Squadron Leader (3), Staff Major (4), Group Leader (5), Air Marshal (6)
Law Enforcer:	Corporal (1), Sergeant (2), Lieutenant (3), Detective (4), Chief (5), Commissioner (6)
Marine:	Lieutenant (1), Captain (2), Force Commander (3), Lieutenant Colonel (4), Colonel (5), Brigadier (6)
Merchant:	4th Officer (1), 3rd Officer (2), 2nd Officer (3), 1st Officer (4), Captain (5), Owner (6)
Navy:	Ensign (1), Lieutenant (2), Lieutenant Commander (3), Commander (4), Captain (5), Admiral (6)
Noble:	Must purchase rank as Social Standing (see CHARACTERISTICS, above).
Pirate:	Henchman (1), Corporal (2), Sergeant (3), Lieutenant (4), Leader (5)
Sailor:	Ensign (1), Lieutenant (2), Lieutenant Commander (3), Commander (4), Captain (5), Admiral (6)

For example, it will cost 1+2+3+4+5+6=21 pts to become an Admiral in the Navy (or any other rank 6 position).

Non-Noble characters with rank 5 or 6 are allowed to buy Social Standing for 4 pts per +1 Soc – this represents the recognition that high rank brings to the character. Simply give the player back 1 point for each point of Social Standing above 7 they already purchased before reaching this table.

Even pirates qualify for this—remember, the Imperium has privateers—pirates who hunt merchant ships of other states at war with the Imperium. After the war, that recognition can enable the pirate to climb the social ladder. The **Player' Manual** seems to consider the Pirate to automatically have a low Social Standing, but that is not necessarily true.

### SERVICE SKILLS

A character automatically receives the following skills or characteristics based on their rank and terms of service. While these skills should be purchased with character points, do not count them when determining terms of service.

Army	Combat Rifleman +1 (5 pts.)
Army Lieutenant	Submachinegun +1 (3 pts.)
Barbarian	Large Blade +1 (2 pts.)
Barbarian Warrior	*Blade Combat +1 (2 pts.)
Barbarian Chief	Leader +1 (2 pts.)
Belter	Vacc Suit +1 (2 pts.)
Belter (3rd Term)	Zero-G Environ +1 (5 pts.)
Diplomat	Liaison +1 (4 pts.)
Doctor	Medical +1 (2 pts.)
Flyer	*Aircraft +1 (3 pts.)
Hunter	Hunting +1 (4 pts.)
Law Enforcer	Streetwise +1 (2 pts.)
Law Enforcer Detective	Interrogation +1 (5 pts.)
Law Enforcer Chief	Admin +1 (2 pts.)
Law Enforcer Commissioner	Liaison +1 (4 pts.)
Marine	Large Blade +1 (2 pts.)
Marine Lieutenant	Handgun +1 (3 pts.)
Merchant First Officer	Pilot +1 (4 pts.)
Navy Captain	+1 Soc (5 pts.)
Navy Admiral	+1 Soc (5 pts.)
Pirate	Brawling +1 (3 pts.)
Pirate Lieutenant	Pilot +1 (4 pts.)
Rogue	Streetwise +1 (2 pts.)
Sailor	Small Watercraft +1 (3 pts.)
Sailor Lieutenant	Large Watercraft +1 (3 pts.)
Scientist	*Technical +1 (1–3 pts.)
Scout	Pilot +1 (4 pts.)

### PSIONIC TRAINING

If a player has raised their character's Psi level to a high enough level to warrant training (see CHARACTERISTICS, above), they must purchase at least the first level of training in one area, and may purchase more training (at the option of the referee).

Characters may not be trained in game play in areas they did not purchase at least one level of training in during character generation.

Awareness	2 pts.	Clairvoyance	2 pts.
Special	3 pts.	Telekinesis	2 pts.
Telepathy	1 pt.	Teleportation	3 pts.

Note that it will cost a character 88 points to have a Psi level of 11 and be fully trained in Teleportation. This reflects the difficulty in generating such characters. Even more important, the referee should be EXTREMELY limiting in allowing players to purchase "Special" for their characters, unless the special power is rigidly and clearly defined (enhanced Strength, use of already defined powers on others, and so on).

#### MUSTERING OUT BENEFITS

This section is a little tricky. The number of selections the player may make are based on rank and terms served, but character points must be paid for each selection. Further, there are cost modifiers based on rank and terms served, and for possession of the Gambling skill.

The number of selections that may be made between material benefits and cash are determined by the number of terms served, plus a rank modifier (cumulative): if rank 1+, +1; if rank 3+, +1; if rank 5+, +1. Players may not make more than three selections from the cash benefits (see below).

For example, a character who purchased rank 3 and took 18 skill selections will have served 6 terms, and be eligible for 7 mustering out benefit selections.

#### MATERIAL BENEFITS

The character point cost of material benefits is reduced by 1 pt. each if the character's rank is 5+, or if the character's terms served are 5+ (unless the cost is already 1 pt.).

Starship Ownership: 100 tons, 5 pts.; +100 tons, +2 pts.  
 Starship Passage: Low, 1 pt.; Middle, 2 pt.; High, 3 pts.  
 Travellers' Aid Society membership: 5 pts.  
 Sentimental Items: Weapon/Watch/Instruments/Kits, 1 pt.

The Starship Ownership benefit brings a ship (of a type selected by the referee, or from the **Players' Manual**) with it, of varying size (100 tons for the first 5 pts., +100 tons per additional 2 pts paid). This system allows other services to receive ships (and they should have loans), and for the referee to use other designs of various sizes. As a further guideline for referees, characters should not receive a ship larger than 1000 tons in size, and should have Pilot skill to receive the benefit at all. These ships usually have 40-year loans to pay off (see the table below). However, the benefit may be selected multiple times—each additional purchase of this benefit pays off 10 years of loans. Standard ship designs for player use are shown below:

<u>Service</u>	<u>Starship Type</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>Loan</u>
Belter	Seeker (100 tons)	5 pts.	yes
Hunter	Safari Ship (200 tons)	7 pts.	yes
Merchant	Far Trader (200 tons)	7 pts.	yes
Merchant	Free Trader (200 tons)	7 pts.	yes
Pirate	Corsair (400 tons)	11 pts.	no
Noble	Yacht (200 tons)	7 pts.	yes
Scientist	Lab Ship (400 tons)	11 pts.	yes
Scouts	Scout (100 tons)	5 pts.	no

The "free" receipt of ships by Pirates and Scouts seems to unbalance the point system. However, Pirates are hunted by everyone, and will have problems finding a home port. Scouts are subject to "reenlistment" (ship and crew), and being required to turn any information discovered while using the ship over to the service. Those two factors balance out the "free" ship.

The Starship Passage benefits are self-explanatory. The Travellers' Aid Society membership is always a good thing to have.

The "Weapon" choice under Sentimental Items refers to receiving a weapon that the player can use, and not receiving the skill. The skill should be purchased as a normal skill. The other sentimental items are a special case—the player may put more points into them, and the item will be more valuable (such as a gold and diamond watch, or platinum doctor's instruments). Use the cash benefits table (see below) to determine the added worth (if a player puts 4 points (1 + 3 for added value) into his pocket watch, it will be worth an additional Cr 10,000.

#### CASH BENEFITS

The character point cost of cash is reduced by 1 pt. each if the character's terms served are 5+, or if the character possesses Gambling skill.

Cr 1,000	1 pt.	Cr 10,000	3 pts.
Cr 50,000	7 pts.	Cr 100,000	12 pts.

#### CAMPAIGN USE

After character generation, this point system is still useful. All starting character points should be used, and not saved. Then, at the end of each adventure, award 1 or 2 character points to each player for their character, based on the actions of their character and how well they role-played, then allow these points to be spent to improve their character. Use the cost of the skill or characteristic in points as a guide, as to how much game time learning or training with that skill or characteristic will require while adventuring. Treat psionic development in game play as skills and characteristics.

In campaigns where characters are very active, and there just isn't a lot of inactivity, learning a new skill may require a month per character point in cost. In campaigns where the referee prefers the characters progress more quickly, two weeks per character point may work better. Again, a referee should decide the rate at which he or she wants their characters to progress, and modify this system accordingly.

For example, a player wants his character to learn the Ship's Boat skill (cost: 1 pt.). So, his pilot buddy teaches him during their off time while out in space, or during fuel runs and so on, and after two weeks, he has Ship's Boat-1.

If the player is trying to improve a skill his character already has, then increase the time needed by multiplying by the level trying to be gained—for example, a character has Computer-3, and the player wants to increase it to Computer-4. So, he spends his off time writing software, and 16 weeks later (2 pts. cost multiplied by level-4 multiplied by two weeks), has Computer-4.

This time system assumes that the character, like most, is adventuring the bulk of the time—if the player decides to have his character concentrate on learning the skill (formal training), then cut the time in half.

When using this system for character generation and using the random aging tables in the **Players' Manual** in game play, allow the players to use saved character points to add to their die rolls against aging. This reflects a character's attempt to "regain their youth", perhaps joining a health club, trying odd, exotic skin creams, working out and so on. Further, once a characteristic has dropped a point due to aging, it may not be purchased higher.

#### FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The problem of Social Standing, the effect of rank on it and how is developed in game play is up to individual referees. If service rank just isn't used often in your campaign, then rank should cost less, and should not modify the cost of Social Standing. However, most Navy Admirals have high Social Standings—whether they gained their rank through their noble connections, or if their performance as a naval officer earned them their nobility—the connection is obvious. Allowing nobility a 1 pt. cost break on rank seemed a bit much, as it allowed them automatic entry as an officer. However, that conforms somewhat to historical developments here on Earth, so it may not be far off.

The skill costs may seem off somewhat, and I recommend that referees consider adjusting them to fit to their campaigns. As presented here, they are derived from the probability of their being randomly gained from the basic character generation system in the **Players' Manual**.

Further, a system of skill cost breaks dependent on service was considered, but it made character comparisons based on point totals impossible. However, referees may want to develop such for their campaigns.

The cost for having Psionics may seem extremely high—however, this is the equivalent of the decreases-with-age based system in the **Players' Manual**. The system presented here allows for the possibility that the talents may have been learned during, or as part of, the character's terms of service.

Finally, the cost of service ranks may seem high (21 pts. for rank 6), but high ranks are their own benefit to the character. They bring contacts within that service, and the character may be known outside his service as well. This is the reason that high service rank may be used to lessen the cost of buying Social Standing.

#### SAMPLE CHARACTERS (FROM **PLAYERS' MANUAL**)

1. Navy Lieutenant (63 pts.)  
5948D9      Age 30              3 terms              Cr 60,000  
Sensor Ops-3, Admin-1, Communications-1, Brawling-1, Vacc Suit-1, Forward Observer-1, Handgun-1
2. Marine Captain Baron (76 pts.)  
88876C      Age 34              4 terms              Cr 2,000  
Handgun-3, ATV-1, Large Blade-1, Battle Dress-1, Combat Engineering-1, Grav Vehicle-1, Combat Rifleman-1, Vacc Suit-1, Brawling-1, Electronic-1, HE Weapons-1
3. Army Major (76 pts.)  
7BBB78      Age 30              3 terms              Cr 10,000  
Handgun-3, Combat Rifleman-2, Brawling-2, Grav Vehicle-2, Submachinegun-1, Tactics-1
4. Scout (37 pts.)  
BC7687      Age 30              3 terms              Cr 0  
Leader-2, Electronic-2, Pilot-1, Ship's Boat-1, Vacc Suit-1, Handgun-1, Mechanical-1, Grav Vehicle-1
5. Flyer Flight Leader (40 pts.)  
37CC84      Age 26              2 terms              Cr 20,000  
Handgun-4, JP Aircraft-2, Brawling-1, Vacc Suit-0  
1 low passage
6. Sailor Lieutenant (50 pts.)  
7C7678      Age 30              3 terms              Cr 51,000  
Communications-4, Battle Dress-2, Combat Engineering-1, Small Watercraft-1, Large Watercraft-1, Vacc Suit-0, \*Gun Combat-0
7. Law Enforcer Sergeant (59 pts.)  
5A7B88      Age 30              3 terms              Cr 10,000  
Laser Weapons-2, Streetwise-2, Leader-1, Interview-1, Carousing-1, Tactics-1, Electronics-1, Artisan-1, \*Gun Combat-0  
1 low passage, laser pistol
8. Doctor (47 pts.)  
4AB877      Age 30              3 terms              Cr 120,000  
Medical-4, Electronics-4, Computer-1, Linguistics-1, \*Gun Combat-0
9. Diplomat (33 pts.)  
984AAA      Age 26              2 terms              Cr 10,000  
Liaison-1, Gambling-1, Bribery-1, Streetwise-1, Robot Ops-1, Instruction-1, Computer-1, \*Gun Combat-0

10. Bureaucrat Director (97 pts.)  
 759AC2      Age 50      8 terms      Cr 50,000  
 Leader-6, Liaison-3, Brawling-2, Jack-o-T-2, Grav Vehicle-2, Trader-2, Interrogation-1,  
 Carousing-1, Computer-1, Linguistics-1, Handgun-1  
 1 mid passage, autopistol
11. Scientist (51 pts.)  
 5897A7      Age 30      3 terms      Cr 50,000  
 Biology-3, Jack-o-T-2, Artisan-1, Sensor Ops-1, Small Blade-1, \*Gun Combat-0  
 1 mid passage, lab ship (400 tons)
12. Noble Knight (50 pts.)  
 69777B      Age 30      3 terms      Cr 10,000  
 Brawling-3, Handgun-2, Streetwise-2, Disguise-1, Grav Belt-1, \*Gun Combat-0  
 1 high passage, yacht (200 tons)
13. Merchant 2nd Officer (55 pts.)  
 588547      Age 30      3 terms      Cr 20,000  
 Electronics-3, Pilot-1, Robotics-1, Mechanic-1, Streetwise-1, Grav Vehicle-1, Linguistics-1, Vacc  
 Suit-0, \*Gun Combat-0
14. Belter (37 pts.)  
 6A4669      Age 26      2 terms      Cr 1,000  
 Prospecting-3, Laser Weapons-2, Zero-G Environ-1, Vacc Suit-1  
 TAS membership, laser pistol
15. Pirate Sergeant (58 pts.)  
 A69A64      Age 38      5 terms      Cr 0  
 Streetwise-2, Small Blades-2, Bribery-2, Brawling-1, Handgun-1, Rifleman-1, Turret Weapons-1,  
 Pilot-1, Navigation-1, Large Blades-1, Intrusion-1, Zero-G Environ-1, Vacc Suit-0  
 2 middle passages, 1 low passage, dagger
16. Rogue (-3 pts.)  
 86A863      Age 22      1 terms      Cr 20,000  
 Leader-1, Intrusion-1, Streetwise-1, \*Gun Combat-0
17. Hunter (49 pts.)  
 8A9786      Age 38      5 terms      Cr 1,000  
 Hunting-3, Rifleman-3, Sensor Ops-2, Stealth-2, Survival-1, Handgun-1, Small Blades-1,  
 Communications-1, Grav Vehicle-1  
 2 low passages, autorifle, safari ship (200 tons)
18. Barbarian (26 pts.)  
 A36459      Age 30      3 terms      Cr 10,000  
 Brawling-2, Recon-2, Crossbow-2, Survival-1, Large Blade-1, Rifleman-1  
 light crossbow, shotgun

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