From Irene C. Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell

Build a coherent literacy system in your school and improve student outcomes with . . .

The Literacy Quick Guide

A Reference Tool for Responsive Literacy Teaching

Heinemann
DEDICATED TO TEACHERS

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Fountas & Pinnell LITERACY™
ELEVATING TEACHER EXPERTISE

Energize your CLASSROOM

The Literacy Quick Guide provides a concise description of a coherent literacy system in which all instructional contexts are reciprocally connected to improve student outcomes. This information-packed guide provides an important look at reading, writing, talking, and word study, while succinctly describing research-based instructional practices for high-impact literacy teaching.
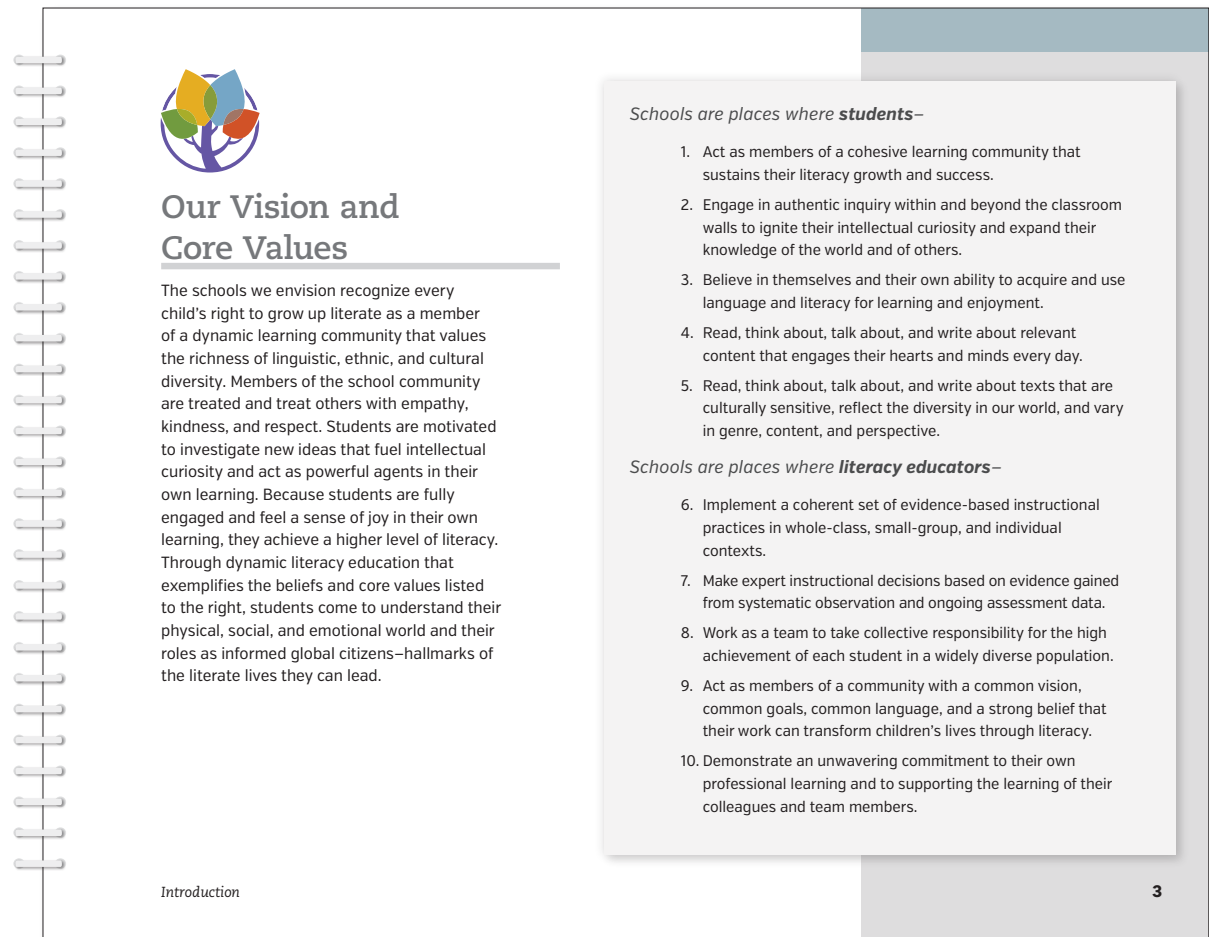
GRADES
PreK–8

Introduction

Irene C. Fountas & Gay Su Pinnell

The
Literacy
Quick Guide

A Reference Tool for Responsive Literacy Teaching

A Design for Responsive Literacy Teaching

Reading

Fountas & Pinnell
LITERACY
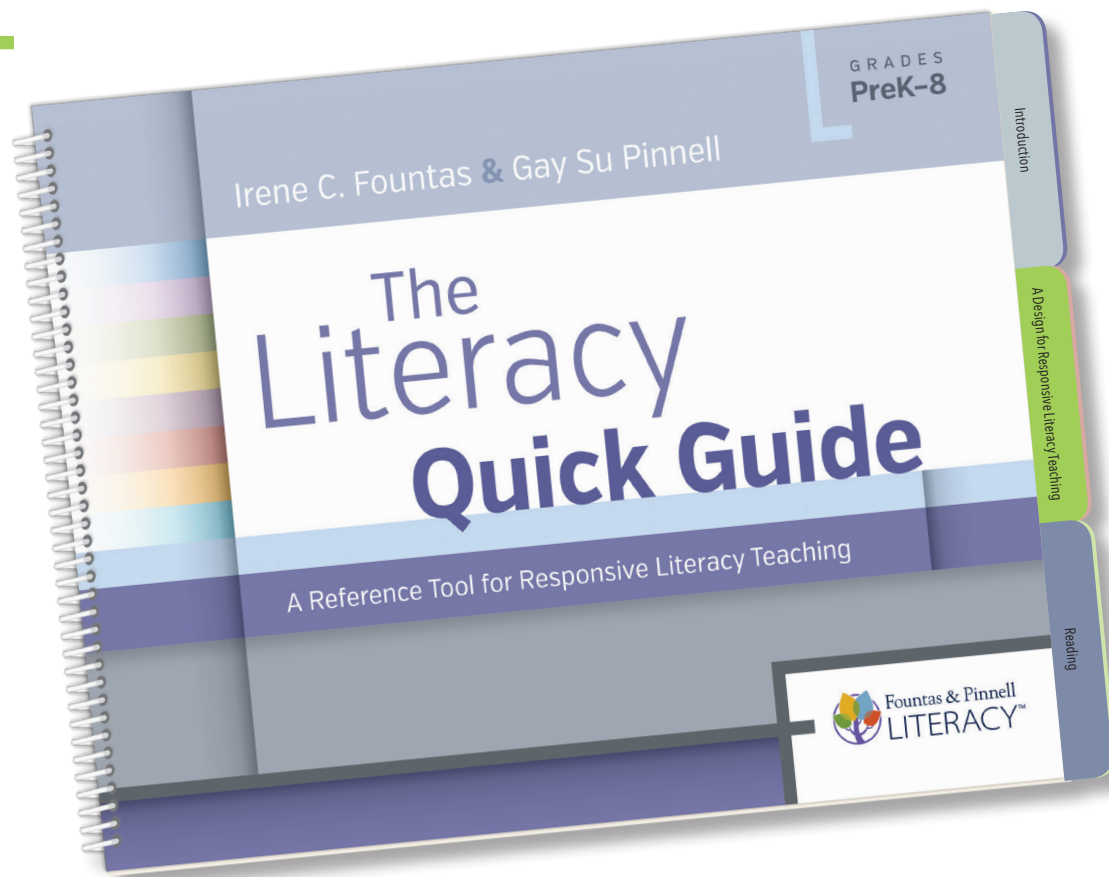
The MUST-HAVE literacy tool for ALL teachers and school leaders.

Create a CLEAR vision

The literacy system described in *The Literacy Quick Guide* is based on Fountas and Pinnell's vision for schools and a set of core values that they hold for students and literacy educators. These values reflect a vision that is worthy of the children we teach.

View sample pages online at
www.fountasandpinnell.com

Our Vision and Core Values

The schools we envision recognize every child's right to grow up literate as a member of a dynamic learning community that values the richness of linguistic, ethnic, and cultural diversity. Members of the school community are treated and treat others with empathy, kindness, and respect. Students are motivated to investigate new ideas that fuel intellectual curiosity and act as powerful agents in their own learning. Because students are fully engaged and feel a sense of joy in their own learning, they achieve a higher level of literacy. Through dynamic literacy education that exemplifies the beliefs and core values listed to the right, students come to understand their physical, social, and emotional world and their roles as informed global citizens—hallmarks of the literate lives they can lead.

*Schools are places where **students**–*

1. Act as members of a cohesive learning community that sustains their literacy growth and success.
2. Engage in authentic inquiry within and beyond the classroom walls to ignite their intellectual curiosity and expand their knowledge of the world and of others.
3. Believe in themselves and their own ability to acquire and use language and literacy for learning and enjoyment.
4. Read, think about, talk about, and write about relevant content that engages their hearts and minds every day.
5. Read, think about, talk about, and write about texts that are culturally sensitive, reflect the diversity in our world, and vary in genre, content, and perspective.

*Schools are places where **literacy educators**–*

6. Implement a coherent set of evidence-based instructional practices in whole-class, small-group, and individual contexts.
7. Make expert instructional decisions based on evidence gained from systematic observation and ongoing assessment data.
8. Work as a team to take collective responsibility for the high achievement of each student in a widely diverse population.
9. Act as members of a community with a common vision, common goals, common language, and a strong belief that their work can transform children's lives through literacy.
10. Demonstrate an unwavering commitment to their own professional learning and to supporting the learning of their colleagues and team members.

Spark COLLABORATION

With **The Literacy Quick Guide** at your fingertips, teachers and administrators can:

✔	**Design effective literacy instruction for today's classroom, school, and districts.**
✔	**Plan instructional time to support literacy learning in a variety of contexts.**
✔	**Organize your classroom for effective, efficient literacy teaching.**
✔	**Provide a rich, coherent instructional design for your teaching.**

PERFECT FOR:

- PreK–8 classroom teachers
- Literacy coaches
- Literacy specialists
- Instructional leaders
- School administrators
- District literacy leaders
- Professional learning communities

Create COHERENCE

The Fountas & Pinnell Literacy Continuum is a tool that helps you think about, plan for, and reflect on the literacy instruction you provide to individuals, small groups, and the whole class. Throughout *The Literacy Quick Guide*, you will find references to pages in *The Literacy Continuum* that will support your planning and teaching of the instructional contexts.
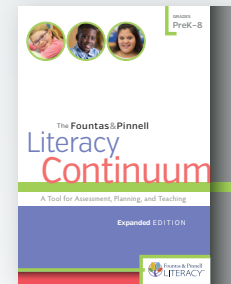
Embrace a COMPREHENSIVE design

The Literacy Quick Guide is your in-the-hand reference tool for responsive literacy teaching.

Support for English Learners

Throughout **The Literacy Quick Guide,** there are suggestions on ways to support English learners in your literacy classroom.

A Design for Responsive Literacy Teaching

Comprehensive Design

Successful language and literacy learning is built on your understanding of how students develop as readers, writers, and language users. An effective instructional design is represented in each setting of literacy teaching—whole group, small group, and individual—across different instructional contexts, as shown in the graphic on page 5.
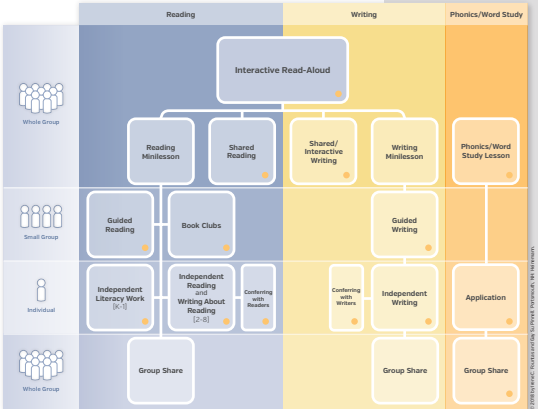
Whole-Group Teaching

Some instruction is most efficiently delivered to the entire class at the same time. Whole-group time also builds a sense of community as students meet together to share learning. Whole-group instructional contexts include Interactive Read-Aloud (page 26); Reading Minilesson (page 38); Shared Reading (page 28); Shared/Interactive Writing (page 62–63); Writing Minilesson (page 70); Phonics/Word Study lesson (page 78); and Group Share (pages 39, 70, 79).

Small-Group Teaching

You can bring students together in a small group based on their level of development, needs, or interests. Small-group instructional contexts are Guided Reading (page 30); Book Clubs (page 34); and Guided Writing (page 64).

Individual Teaching

Individual teaching increases your knowledge of each student's progress and the impact of your instruction. Individual contexts include Independent Literacy Work, K–1 or Independent Reading and Writing About Reading, 2–8 (pages 32, 46); Independent Writing (page 66); and Phonics/Word Study Application (page 79).

SUSTAINING THE HOME LANGUAGES OF ENGLISH LEARNERS

Language use is at the heart of every child's culture. The ways students learn to use language in the home and extended family will be important to them throughout their lives. As literacy teachers, it's our role to respect the home language (and the customs that surround it) and encourage students to sustain it. School needs to represent an *expansion* of the English learner's language repertoire, not a *correction*.

Talking About Reading

What Is Talking About Reading?

Language grounded in texts is significantly different from conversations in other contexts. Unlike casual sharing, it is purposeful discussion in which students make strong and explicit links between their own experiences and understanding and the larger ideas in a text. As a teacher, you can lift students' comprehension of texts as well as their ability to articulate their thinking by guiding the conversation and helping students learn how to keep it grounded in texts.

Why Talk About Reading?

The primary vehicle for learning is talk. Talk is thinking. When students talk, they communicate and refine their ideas, reveal their understandings and perspectives, and make meaning from texts and experiences. Therefore, text-based, interactive talk structures are an essential component of each instructional context in a coherent literacy system.

TALK STRUCTURES ACROSS THE DAY

IRA	SR	GR	IR	BC
Whole-Group Discussion	Whole-Group Discussion	Small-Group Discussion	Conferring (page 43)	Small-Group Discussion
Turn and Talk (page 42)	Turn and Talk (page 42)	Turn and Talk (page 42)		Turn and Talk (page 42)

Provide CLARITY

Simply laid-out tools, definitions, and teaching opportunities are built into *The Literacy Quick Guide* making your design for effective literacy instruction that much easier.

Concise explanations & graphics

Clear definitions

Easily accessible teaching tools

Leveled Texts

What Are Leveled Books?

Leveled books are books that have been categorized along a gradient of difficulty from easiest, Level A, to most complex, Level Z. A book's level is a quick way to think about the text characteristics and processing challenges that readers are likely to encounter when reading that particular text.

Using Levels to Select Books for Guided Reading Lessons

Studying the text characteristics of books at a given level will provide a good inventory of the challenges readers will meet across the level. Remember that there are a great variety of texts within each letter level. These characteristics apply to what is generally true for texts at the level across that variety. For the individual text, some factors may be more important than others in making demands on the readers. Examining these texts factors in relation to a particular group of readers will help you plan effective book introductions and tailor your teaching points.

Why a Level Matters

The text level is a guide to analyzing and selecting appropriate texts for a group of readers, but text selection is more than that. Remember that you are teaching the reader, not the text. Every action in text selection is directed toward helping readers learn new ways of problem solving and thinking about texts that they can apply to other texts they read. They are developing the "fast brainwork" required by texts of increasing difficulty. The level of a text has everything to do with an expansion of each reader's network of systems of strategic actions.

Level A
Level E
Level J
Level N
Level Y

Purposeful reminders

What Is a Text Gradient?

A gradient of text reflects a defined continuum of characteristics against which you can evaluate texts. An invaluable resource in selecting texts for particular groups of students, a text gradient also offers guidance in designing lessons.

A text gradient *is*:	A text gradient is *not*:
▶ A tool for teachers to use in analyzing texts	▶ A tool for students to use in choosing books for independent reading
▶ A tool for selecting books for small-group reading instruction	▶ A tool for students to use in tracking their own progress
▶ A tool for recording progress over time in reading	▶ A label that students attach to themselves as readers
▶ A reference for teachers in designing lessons and planning teaching moves	▶ A label for book baskets in a classroom library
▶ A guide to determining whether readers are meeting grade-level expectations	▶ An incentive for students to practice reading
▶ A signal that a reader may need intensive intervention in reading	▶ A way for students to compare themselves with others
▶ A support for teachers in guiding readers to make good choices for independent reading (when necessary)	▶ A grade on a report card
	▶ A label communicated to parents

F&P TEXT LEVEL GRADIENT™

FOUNTAS AND PINNELL LEVELS	GRADE-LEVEL GOALS
A	
B	
C	Kindergarten
D	
E	
F	
G	Grade One
H	
I	
J	
K	Grade Two
L	
M	
N	Grade Three
O	
P	
Q	Grade Four
R	
S	Grade Five
T	
U	
V	Grade Six
W	
X	
Y	Grade Seven–Eight
Z	High School/Adult
Z+	

Coherence connections

Continuum Connection

The *Fountas & Pinnell Literacy Continuum* lists detailed text characteristics and goals (behaviors and understandings to notice, teach for, and support) for each level of the gradient, levels A–Z.

Text Sets

You can tell students what to notice about books, but learning is much more powerful if they take the stance of an inquirer into literature. They get inside the thinking by constructing the understanding themselves. By combining books in text sets, you make it possible for students to look across several texts and construct deeper understandings than they otherwise would if they simply encounter one text after another in a random way. Often you will sequence books within a text set to support specific teaching goals.

What Is a Text Set?

A text set is a collection of two or more books that can be connected because they have common features. Text sets are used for highly intentional teaching through interactive read-aloud, shared reading, book clubs, and reading minilessons. They may also be a helpful way to organize books to support student choice during independent reading.

Why Text Sets Are Important

Text sets connect books in a way that helps students build specific understandings from book to book. Through text sets, students can gain experience with and develop a deep understanding of a topic, author or illustrator, genre, or element of craft. Text sets can help students:

- Understand how literary elements contribute to a story
- Get to know the work of specific authors and illustrators
- Explore content-area topics in depth
- Experience different aspects of a genre
- Learn about universal problems
- Examine history from different perspectives
- Expand their use of academic language to talk about texts

Grade 2 text set focused on earth science
(Fountas & Pinnell Classroom, 2018)

GROUPING TEXTS BY DIFFERENT CHARACTERISTICS

Characteristic	Description
Author	Conduct an author study by reading several works by a single author.
Illustrator	Conduct an illustrator study by reading several works by a single illustrator.
Topic	Group texts by topics such as family or friends or by science or social studies content (e.g., animals, earth science, space, or a particular culture).
Genre	Text sets in like genres are an ideal way to begin the study of genre characteristics, first, by immersing students in four or five examples that clearly reflect the most common features of the genre and then engaging them in an inquiry process to learn the essential characteristics.
Literary Analysis	Group texts by any aspect of literature, e.g., setting, similar characters, or story problems and resolutions.
Text Structure	Group nonfiction texts by the organization writers use, e.g., categorical structure with headings or narrative structure.
Themes	Group texts by putting together those with similar messages and themes, e.g., overcoming obstacles or appreciating cultural differences.
Award-Winning Books	Organize books that have received critical recognition, such as recipients of the Newbery, Caldecott, or Orbis Pictus awards.

EFFECTIVE PRACTICES FOR TEACHING WITH TEXT SETS

- Texts are **versatile**. A single text can be part of many different sets. A text set need not be a static collection.
- After students experience a text set, encourage them to **suggest other titles** that are connected.
- **Keep lists** of potential text sets rather than assembling them physically to allow more flexibility in how you use individual books. If you have a list and a system for storing books for quick retrieval, text sets can easily be assembled when needed.
- Keep an eye out for **new titles** to add to your text sets.
- Pull from text sets **clear examples** of particular characteristics for reading and writing minilessons.

USING TEXT SETS WITH MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

Text sets are a powerful tool for expanding students' understandings in social studies, science, math, and other content areas. Students in middle school are ready to wrestle with texts that provide opposing arguments and divergent views about a topic. You may wish to have the whole class read one text, sometimes called an *anchor text*. Partners or small groups can then assemble their own supporting texts based on their exploration of a topic or theme that interests them in the anchor text.

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GR

Small-Group Instruction

TOOLS AND TEXTS

- A range of high-quality, short texts that are leveled (A–Z)
- Occasional longer texts, such as chapter books, to build stamina
- *The Fountas & Pinnell Literacy Continuum*
- Record-keeping form to keep track of observations made during guided reading
- Reading record forms
- Reading graphs to document progress

TIME

- Optimal: 3 guided reading groups each day, approximately 25 minutes each, for a total of 75 minutes (May be shorter for early levels, e.g., 10–15 minutes)
- Limited Time: Meet daily with the groups of readers at the lowest reading levels; meet with other groups 3 times per week

Guided Reading

What Is Guided Reading?

During guided reading, students in a small-group setting individually read a text that you have selected. You provide teaching across the lesson to support students in building in-the-head networks of strategic actions for processing increasingly challenging texts.

Why Guided Reading Is Important

As an instructional context, guided reading:

- Supports readers in expanding their processing competencies (in-the-head systems of strategic actions)
- Provides a context for responsive teaching
- Allows students to engage with a rich variety of texts
- Helps students learn to think like proficient readers
- Enables students to read more challenging texts with support

What Guided Reading Looks Like

A small group of students who are at a similar point in their reading development are seated across from you at a small table. Each student reads, softly or silently, the same text individually. Guide a discussion of the text meaning and make teaching points based on your observations of the students' reading strengths and needs.

Planning for Guided Reading

- Organize multiple copies of books by level, e.g., behind the small-group table or in a school book room. These books are for teacher choice to use in instruction.
- Identify each student's instructional level and form (or re-form) groups of readers who are at a similar point in their development of reading processes.
- Select and analyze a text to determine challenges and learning opportunities.
- Plan an introduction to the text to set readers up for effective problem solving.

STRUCTURE OF A GUIDED READING LESSON

Introduce the Text	Provide support to enable proficient reading of the new text, while also leaving some problem-solving to do.
Support Students' Reading of the Text	Observe students' reading behaviors. Intervene very briefly if needed to teach for, prompt, or reinforce each reader's problem-solving actions.
Guide Discussion of the Text	Encourage students' expression of thinking with talk grounded in the text. Observe for evidence of students' thinking within, beyond, and about the text.
Engage in Generative Teaching	Provide specific teaching that is appropriate for the group based on your observations of the reading and talk about the text. Direct students' attention to strategic actions they can apply not only to this text but to other texts they read.
Engage Students in Letter and Word Work	Teach to increase rapid word-analysis skills and flexibility in word solving.
Extend Understanding Through Writing (Optional)	Prompt students to draw and/or write about reading. Encourage expression of thinking within, beyond, and about the text.

Assessment and Record Keeping

Begin the year with a benchmark assessment to form groups and to know where to begin teaching. Establish a system for coding, scoring, and analyzing a reading record for each student on a regular basis. Students who are gaining control of effective processing more slowly will need more frequent monitoring through the use of more frequent reading records. Daily observations and the data from your continuous assessments reveal how individual students are responding to your instruction and enable you to form and re-form groups for high-impact instruction. Use the benchmark assessment again as an interval assessment and at the end of the year to document progress.

EFFECTIVE PRACTICES FOR GUIDED READING

- Use **reading records** in the *Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System* or another interval text-level assessment tool to form initial groups and to determine the level at which to start teaching.
- Groups are **dynamic** because readers take on new learning at different rates.
- The better you know your students and the more thoroughly you **analyze the text**, the easier it will be to plan your lessons.
- Using your ongoing reading records, select from *The Literacy Continuum* a few **behaviors and understandings** at the students' instructional level to emphasize in your teaching.
- Support students in noticing and using **new vocabulary** during their discussion of the text.
- During or right after a group lesson, jot down **important observations** while they are fresh in your mind.

Continuum Connection

Consult pages 399–629 to expand your knowledge of the text characteristics and goals for each text level, A–Z.

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COMPLETE your design for literacy instruction with . . .

Fountas & Pinnell Classroom™

Increase the impact of your literacy instruction by implementing all of the **Fountas & Pinnell Classroom™** instructional contexts to create a complete, comprehensive, and coherent system of literacy education.

IRA **RML** **SR** **GR** **IR** **BC** **PWS**

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