

**TRANSPORT and ROAD
RESEARCH LABORATORY**

**Department of the Environment
Department of Transport**

TRRL LABORATORY REPORT 931

A COMPARISON OF TWO METHODS OF DRIVER TESTING

by

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**Any views expressed in this Report are not necessarily those of the
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ABSTRACT

In order to compare advanced driving tests run by the Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM) with Department of Transport (DTp) learner driver tests, TRRL Driving Consultants who had been DTp driving examiners, observed 120 IAM tests and assessed and marked faults according to DTp procedure.

Although differences were found between the marking procedures in the two forms of tests, in 103 cases out of 120 there was agreement on pass/fail decisions. The total number of serious and dangerous faults recorded by the TRRL Driving Consultants increased as the test proceeded when the number of faults in each separate successive 30 minute period out of the 90 minute test was examined. The 'pass' rates, based on the proportion of candidates who did not show such faults, decreased with the duration of the driving test from 83 per cent after 30 minutes to 52 per cent after 90 minutes.

1. INTRODUCTION

The advanced driving tests observed in this study were run by the Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM). The IAM has been carrying out tests for over 20 years and has conducted over 200,000 tests. Passing the test is a requirement for membership of the IAM. The tests are carried out by examiners who are similar in their driving experience and training, while all have previously served as Class 1 drivers in a police force.

A previous study by the Transport and Road Research Laboratory¹ showed that a group of drivers which had passed the IAM test had a better accident record subsequently than a group which had not.

This particular study was undertaken to compare IAM assessments of driving with assessments similar to those used in the Department of Transport official test for learner drivers. It also provided data on the likely effects of increasing the duration of driving tests.

2. METHOD

Seven TRRL Driving Consultants, who had been driving examiners carrying out learner driving tests for the Department of Transport (DTp), observed 120 driving tests conducted by 12 examiners of the IAM. A TRRL Consultant sat in the rear of each candidate's car and assessed and marked faults as they occurred.

After the test drive, the TRRL Consultant made notes of any discussions that occurred between the IAM examiners and their candidates and recorded the examiners' pass/fail decisions. The IAM provided TRRL with copies of their test report forms for these 120 candidates in order that the IAM fault assessments could be compared in detail with those made by the TRRL Consultants.

2.1 Test procedure

2.1.1 Fault classification and recording. The TRRL mark sheet (Appendix 1) lists 61 items compared with 28 items on the IAM form (Appendix 2). All but one of the items on the TRRL form can be marked under a heading on the IAM form although the IAM items deal with larger categories of driver performance (Appendix 3). Some items on the IAM form have no TRRL equivalent, for example: – ‘observance of road surfaces’, ‘correct use of the horn’, ‘aptitude’, ‘restraint’, ‘car sympathy’ and ‘commentary’. Both IAM and TRRL fault markings were classified into two groups, control faults and procedure faults (Appendix 4).

The methods of assessment and marking used by the consultants were similar to those used in the DTp learner driver test but the TRRL mark sheet contains 11 fewer items than the DTp form. This is because items that are not covered by IAM tests were not included (for example the eyesight test) and some of the DTp items have been amalgamated into larger categories. The TRRL mark sheet, unlike the DTp form, was provided with three columns for markings, so that the 90 minute drive could be broken down into three 30 minute periods and every fault in each period assessed and marked separately as it occurred.

Faults were classified by the TRRL Consultants according to the severity of the error as minor, serious and dangerous and they based their judgements on the same standards as they had used in learner driver tests.

On the IAM report forms, a mark was made against items where the driver was at fault, together with a written comment describing the fault. The IAM mark sheets were not filled in until the end of the test but some IAM examiners wrote comments in note-pads during the tests.

2.1.2 Pass/fail decisions. Candidates were failed by IAM examiners when they did not satisfy the examiners’ standards of advanced driving. All IAM forms of the failed candidates had at least one fault marked, but the procedure by which the examiners wrote down comments in note-pads and marked the report forms at the end of the test differs from the DTp procedure.

In the DTp test the decision is based on the marks made during the test, on the DTp form. Even if there is only one serious or dangerous fault marked on the form, the DTp examiner must fail the candidate. The TRRL Consultants followed the same procedure in this exercise so that the drivers were considered to have ‘failed’ if they were marked as having made one or more serious or dangerous fault.

2.1.3 Test duration and the types of route used. On average the candidates drove for about 90 minutes. The routes were between 30 and 35 miles long and consisted of a wide variety of roads with speed limits varying from 30 mile/h up to 70 mile/h. A DTp test route normally involves mainly urban/residential driving at comparatively moderate speeds over 5 to 6 miles which can be covered in about 30 to 35 minutes.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Type of road used

The type of road on which the major part of each 30 minute period of the IAM test was spent was recorded by the TRRL Consultant and details are shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Type of roads predominating in each test period

Test period	Main roads	Urban roads	Residential roads	Rural roads	Town Centre roads	Total number of tests
1 (1– 30 mins)	60	1	18	6	35	120
2 (31– 60 mins)	30	0	16	74	0	120
3 (61– 90 mins)	42	3	21	1	53	120

The distributions of the types of roads used were significantly different* between the 3 periods. Main roads were the most common in the first period, rural roads in the middle period, and town centre roads in the final period.

3.2 Examiner-candidate relationships

The TRRL Consultants observed that the IAM tests were conducted more informally than DTp tests. The IAM examiners gave advice and made comments before and sometimes during the test which does not occur in the statutory tests conducted by the DTp.

3.3 Test results

3.3.1 Pass/fail results. Of the 120 candidates tested, 71 (59 per cent) were recommended for IAM membership which is very close to the overall pass rate for all IAM tests since these began (60 per cent).

There is a significantly high level of agreement between the pass/fail decisions of the IAM examiners and the TRRL Consultants (Yule's $Q = 0.94$, $p < 0.01$), the same decisions being reached in 103 out of 120 tests (see Table 2). The TRRL Consultants would have 'failed' somewhat more (58 as compared with 49 by the IAM).

TABLE 2

Comparison of the IAM and TRRL pass/fail decisions

Candidates passed by IAM and 'passed' by TRRL	Candidates failed by IAM and 'failed' by TRRL	Candidates passed by IAM and 'failed' by TRRL	Candidates failed by IAM and 'passed' by TRRL	Total number of tests
58	45	13	4	120

* The term 'statistically significant' is used when the probability of an event occurring by chance is at the 1 in 20 level or less.

A comparison of the IAM and TRRL fault markings of the 45 candidates who failed on both criteria showed that similar categories of driving performance were recorded as faults for most candidates on both the IAM and TRRL forms, but control faults were given as a reason for failure in more cases by the IAM examiners than by the TRRL Consultants (46 to 36) though the difference was not large enough to be statistically significant.

There was no common explanation for the 17 cases where there was disagreement between the IAM and TRRL pass/fail decisions. In some instances this arose because of differences in the judgement of the severity of the faults.

TABLE 3

IAM test results for groups of candidates of different ages

		Estimated age (years)		
		17– 30	31– 50	Over 50
IAM test results	Pass	25	28	18
	Fail	27	11	11
	Percentage pass	48	72	62

The TRRL Consultants assessed the age of the candidates and it was found that candidates in the middle age group (31– 50) were more successful at the IAM test than those in the other age groups (see Table 3), though their pass rate is only significantly higher than that for the youngest group ($\chi^2 = 42$, $p < 0.05$). No significant difference was found between the pass rates of men and women candidates, nor was there any significant difference in the proportions of candidates passed by different IAM examiners, after an allowance had been made for the types of candidates they tested.

3.3.2 Performance during different periods of the tests. The TRRL Consultants had recorded errors separately for the first, second and third half-hour of the test and the results that follow are based upon their markings.

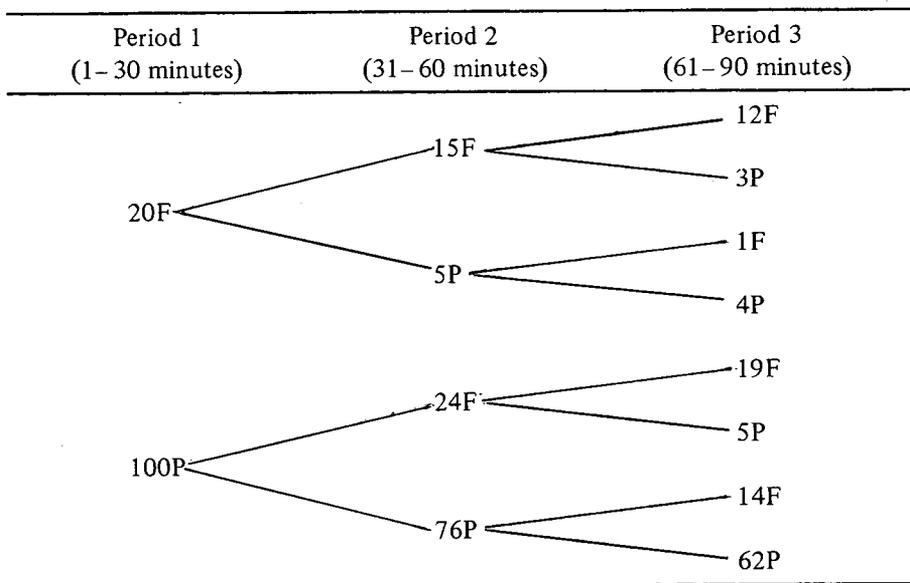
As would be expected, the number of candidates who ‘fail’ increases throughout the test. On the basis of having committed serious or dangerous faults at some time during the test, 20 drivers had ‘failed’ after the first half-hour, 44 had ‘failed’ after the first hour and 58 had ‘failed’ after the whole 90 minutes of the test. If converted to ‘pass-rates’, these would be 83 per cent, 63 per cent and 52 per cent. Increasing the length of the test therefore, appears to decrease the pass-rate.

If it were assumed that the error-rate remained the same throughout as it was at the beginning (with 20 out of 120 drivers making at least one serious or dangerous error per half hour), and that there was no tendency for one driver to be more likely to make such errors than another, it can be calculated that the cumulative ‘pass-rates’ would be 83, 69 and 58 per cent, and these are rather higher in the last two periods than the pass-rates that actually occurred.

Table 4 shows that it is incorrect to assume that there is no tendency for one driver to be more likely to make errors than another. Those who make such errors in Period 1 are more likely than other drivers to make such errors in Period 2, while drivers who commit errors in Periods 1 or 2 are more likely than others to make such errors in Period 3. Out of 20 who 'failed' in the first period, twelve 'failed' in all three separate periods.

TABLE 4

'Pass-fail' decisions by TRRL Consultants at different periods in the test



The other assumption which in fact is incorrect is that drivers are equally likely to make errors in each period of the test. Table 5 shows clearly that although the minor faults decrease progressively in each separate successive period of the test, the number of serious and dangerous faults increases considerably with each successive separate period of the test. Another way of looking at it is to consider how many drivers would have been 'failed' in each period, and the numbers are 20, 39 and 46. What is more, the average number of serious and dangerous faults per 'failed' candidate increases, too, the numbers being 1.9, 2.0 and 2.8 per candidate. Thus it is clear that on average the candidates' driving performance deteriorates continuously as the test progresses but it does not of course apply to all candidates.

TABLE 5

Number of faults marked by TRRL Consultants at different periods in the test

	Period 1 1-30 minutes	Period 2 31-60 minutes	Period 3 61-90 minutes
Number of minor faults* marked	651	501	470
Number of serious and dangerous faults marked	38	78	127

* Whereas all serious and dangerous faults committed were marked, minor faults are sometimes repeated by a candidate so often that such a marking system becomes impracticable. In this table, therefore, the total number of minor faults under-represents the total number of such faults each candidate committed, for the Consultants did not record further minor faults if a candidate had already committed 4 or 5 of that type.

The faults on the TRRL mark sheets were classified into two overall categories, control and procedure faults (see Appendix 4). Table 6 shows the number of serious and dangerous errors committed in each period of the test, with control and procedure faults shown separately. It will be seen that as the test proceeded, faults of both kinds systematically increased.

TABLE 6

Number of control and procedure faults marked by the TRRL Consultants in each test period

	Period 1 1–30 minutes	Period 2 31–60 minutes	Period 3 61–90 minutes
Number of serious and dangerous control faults marked	5	17	40
Number of serious and dangerous procedure faults marked	33	61	87

4. CONCLUSIONS

This study compared results from use of a TRRL marking system (based on the DTp system) with results from use of the IAM system, during the course of IAM tests. Although some differences were found in the types of driving fault assessed, partly due to differences in the fault recording systems, there was substantial agreement (84 per cent) between the pass/fail decisions reached by the TRRL Consultants and those reached by the IAM examiners.

By chance alone it would be expected that increasing the length of the test would decrease the pass rate because of the greater opportunity a longer test provides to commit errors. The separate half-hour assessments made by the TRRL Consultants showed that the 'pass-rate' fell progressively from the first half-hour to the end of the whole 90 minute test, but that in addition to the chance element just described, the group of candidates did in fact put up a worse performance in each successive separate half-hour. Thus the final TRRL 'pass-rate' dropped from 83 per cent in the first half-hour to 52 per cent for the whole test.

The IAM test appears therefore to deserve its title of 'advanced' more because it takes longer than a DTp learner-driver test than because of any tendency for IAM examiners to be more severe in their markings. In fact, these comparisons suggest IAM examiners are slightly less severe.

It is of interest to speculate why some experienced qualified drivers put up a progressively worsening performance when undergoing a 90 minute test. With some tests, increases in faults could have been due to an increase in the difficulty of the route towards the end of some of the tests, for many of the tests ended in town centres where there were more junctions, traffic and pedestrians and therefore more difficult driving conditions and a greater opportunity to commit faults than in the routes used in earlier periods of the tests. However, in 60 tests where the routes in the first and last periods were similar, there was still a significant increase in the number of candidates committing serious or dangerous faults in the last period. With some tests it could be that the length of the test caused fatigue or a breakdown in concentration which led to these mistakes. In some cases candidates may have put on a show of good driving initially, but existing bad habits emerged later on.

One reason for conducting the study was that previous TRRL research had shown that a group of experienced drivers who passed the IAM test had fewer accidents in the 3 years after taking the test than a group which failed. Because the pass/fail results according to the IAM and TRRL assessments were similar it is likely that tests based on the DTp marking system applied by those experienced in using it would also discriminate between groups of experienced drivers in terms of their subsequent accident records if the drivers were tested over a similar length of time and on similar routes to an IAM test.

It is not however possible to estimate from this work the extent to which a 30-minute test similar to the DTp learner driver test can distinguish between groups of learner drivers in terms of their subsequent accident involvement.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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6. REFERENCES

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Explanation of main fault headings abbreviations on TRRL mark sheet

PRE	Precautions before starting engine; handbrake on gear in neutral
ACC	Uncontrolled use of accelerator pedal
CL	Uncontrolled use of clutch
F BR	Late and/or harsh use of footbrake in reducing speed stopping normally
G	Uncontrolled use of gears; not changing gear or selecting neutral when necessary, coasting at places other than on approach to X-roads, junctions and roundabouts
H BR	Not applying or releasing handbrake when necessary
ST POS	Incorrect positioning of hands on wheel or both hands off
ST OS	Erratic steering; overshooting the correct turning point when turning right; use of too much or too little steering
MO ANG	Inability to move off smoothly at an angle
MO HIL	Inability to move off smoothly on a gradient
MO LEV	Inability to move off smoothly on level
SP-	Inability to demonstrate normal progress, including undue hesitation in specific situations
ES	Emergency stop; slow reaction or lack of control
REV CON	Incorrect use of controls when reversing
REV MAN	Inability to manoeuvre with reasonable accuracy when reversing
REV OBS	Lack of observation just before or whilst reversing
TR CON	Incorrect use of controls when turning round
TR MAN	Inability to manoeuvre with reasonable accuracy when turning round
TR OBS	Lack of observation just before or whilst turning round
MIR SIG	Inadequate use of mirror before signalling
MIR DIR	Inadequate use of mirror before changing course
MIR OT	Inadequate use of mirror before overtaking
MIR S	Inadequate use of mirror before stopping
SIG O	Signal omitted where essential to safety
SIG W	Not in accordance with Highway Code; late cancellation of indicators
SIG L	Signal too late to be of value
SNS ST	Non-compliance with Stop sign
SNS KL	Non-compliance with Keep Left sign
SNS NE	Non-compliance with No Entry sign
SNS TRL	Non-compliance with Traffic Lights
CON POL	Non-compliance with signals given by Police or Traffic Wardens
CON SCW	Non-compliance with School Crossing Patrol sign
SNS DIR	Non-compliance with directional arrow(s) Road Markings
SIG ORU	Failure to take appropriate action on signals given by other road users (eg: drivers and persons in charge of animals)
SP+	Speed generally too fast in prevailing road and traffic conditions
X SP+	Excessive speed on approach to X-roads
RLR	Not looking right, left and right again BEFORE emerging at X-roads
EM	Emerging at X-roads without due regard for other traffic which is present or which can reasonably be expected to be present
POS R	Incorrect position before and/or after turning right at X-roads
POS L	Positioning too far from left before and/or after turning left at X-roads or hitting kerb

RCC	Cutting right hand corner at X-roads
J SP+	Excessive speed on approach to road junction
RLR	Not looking right, left and right again BEFORE emerging at a road junction
EM	Emerging at a road junction without due regard for other traffic which is present or which might reasonably be expected to be present
POS R	Incorrect positioning before and/or after turning right at a road junction
POS L	Positioning too far from the left before and/or after turning left at a road junction, or hitting kerb
RCC	Cutting right hand corner at a road junction
OT	Overtaking or attempting to overtake other vehicles unsafely
MAT	Failure to give adequate clearance when meeting traffic coming from the opposite direction
CAT	Cutting across in front of traffic closely approaching from the opposite direction when making a right turn
POS N	Hugging the middle of the road in normal driving; undue hugging of the near-side kerb
SH CYC	Shave, ie near-miss of cyclist(s)
SH PED	Shave, ie near-miss of pedestrian(s)
SH VEH	Shave, ie near-miss of <i>stationary</i> vehicle(s)
PX ATF	Approaching pedestrian crossing(s) too fast
PX DNS	Does not stop when necessary at pedestrian crossing(s)
PX OTO	Overtaking at or when approaching pedestrian crossing(s)
PX INV	Beckoning pedestrians to cross at pedestrian crossing(s)
AA CYC	Lacking in alertness and anticipation of the actions of cyclist(s)
AA PED	Lacking in alertness and anticipation of the actions of pedestrians, beckoning pedestrians to cross at places other than pedestrian crossing(s)
AA DRI	Lacking in alertness and anticipation of the actions of driver(s)
H/B	Handbrake
ACC+	Excessive pressure on accelerator pedal
ACC1	Insufficient pressure on accelerator pedal
CL	Clutch
G	Gear
M/O	Move off
O/S	Over steer
U/S	Under steer
O/R	Observation to rear
Sig 0	Signal omitted
O/F	Observation to front
X	Cross roads
J	Junction

8. APPENDIX 2
IAM DRIVING TEST MARK SHEET
DRIVING TEST REPORT

CANDIDATE'S NAME _____ ESTIMATED AGE _____

CAR & REGISTRATION NUMBER _____

CAR CONTROL

Acceleration _____	
Braking _____	
Clutch Control _____	
Gear Changing _____	
Gears, use of _____	
Steering _____	
Depotment at wheel _____	

TRAFFIC DRIVING

Traffic Observation _____	
Maintaining adequate progress _____	
Obstructing other vehicles _____	
Positioning _____	
Observance of speed limits _____	
Observance of road surfaces _____	

SIGNALS, SIGNS, PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS

Observation and obedience _____	
Method of approach _____	

BEHAVIOUR ON ROADS

Distance observation _____	
Correct use of speed _____	
Consideration of other road users _____	
Overtaking _____	
Hazard procedure and Cornering _____	
Use of driving mirrors _____	
Hand or mechanical signals _____	
Correct use of horn _____	
Aptitude _____	
Restraint _____	
Car sympathy _____	
Commentary _____	

MANOEUVRING & REVERSING

Miscellaneous _____	
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GENERAL REMARKS

STATE OF ROADS AND WEATHER CONDITIONS _____

TIME FROM _____ TO _____ ROUTE _____

RECOMMENDED _____ DATE _____ EXAMINER _____

NOT RECOMMENDED _____

9. APPENDIX 3

A COMPARISON OF THE FAULT CATEGORIES ON THE TRRL AND IAM MARK SHEETS

TRRL MARK		IAM EQUIVALENT	TRRL MARK		IAM EQUIVALENT	
PRE		No IAM equivalent	SNS	ST	Signals, Signs & PED X	
ACC		Acceleration		KL	Signals, Signs & PED X	
CL		Clutch Control		NE	Signals, Signs & PED X	
F.BR		Braking		TRL	Signals, Signs & PED X	
G		Gear changing – Gears, use of		DIR	Signals, Signs & PED X	
			CON	POL	Signals, Signs & PED X	
H.BR		Braking		SCW	Signals, Signs & PED X	
ST	POS	Department at wheel	SIG	ORU	Signals, Signs & PED X	
	OS	Steering	SP+		Correct use of speed Observance of speed limits	
MO	ANG	Hazard procedure	X	SP+	Hazard procedure & cornering	
	HIL	Hazard procedure		RLR	Hazard procedure & cornering	
	LEV	Hazard procedure		EM	Hazard procedure & cornering	
SP-		Maintaining adequate progress		PS R	Hazard procedure & cornering/positioning	
REV	CON	Manoeuvring & reversing		PS L	Hazard procedure & cornering/positioning	
	MAN	Manoeuvring & reversing		RCC	Hazard procedure & cornering	
	OBS	Manoeuvring & reversing	J	SP+	Hazard procedure & cornering	
TR	CON	Manoeuvring & reversing		RLR	Hazard procedure & cornering	
	MAN	Manoeuvring & reversing		EM	Hazard procedure & cornering	
	OBS	Manoeuvring & reversing		POS R	Hazard procedure & cornering/positioning	
MIR	SIG	Use of driving mirrors		POS L	Hazard procedure & cornering/positioning	
	DIG	Use of driving mirrors		RCC	Hazard procedure & cornering	
	OT	Use of driving mirrors	OT		Overtaking	
	S	Use of driving mirrors	MAT		Obstructing other vehicles	
SIG	O	Hand or mechanical signals	CAT		Obstructing other vehicles	
	W	Hand or mechanical signals	POS N		Positioning	
	L	Hand or mechanical signals		SH	CYC	Consideration of other road users
					PED	Consideration of other road users
				VEH	Consideration of other road users	
				PX	ATF	Signals, Signs & PED X
					DNS	Signals, Signs & PED X
OTO					Signals, Signs & PED X	
				INV	Signals, Signs & PED X	
			AA		Traffic observation/Distance observation	

10. APPENDIX 4

CONTROL AND PROCEDURE FAULT CLASSIFICATION

TRRL marks

CONTROL FAULTS

Accelerator
Clutch
Foot Brake
Gears
Hand Brake
Steering Oversteer
Steering Position of hands
Moving off – Angle
Hill
Level
Reversing – Control
Turn in road – Control

PROCEDURE FAULTS

Speed
Use of mirror
Signals
Signs and markings
Controls, Police, etc
Acting on signals of others
Speed+
Cross roads Speed+
Observation
Emerging safely
Positioning
Right corner cut
Road junctions (same as X roads)
Overtaking
Meeting approaching traffic
Cutting across approaching traffic
Normal position
Too close to other road users
Pedestrian crossings – Approach too fast
Does not stop
Overtakes
Signal Peds.
Anticipation of the action of other road users
Reversing – Manoeuvre, Procedure
Turn in the road – Manoeuvre, Procedure

IAM marks

Accelerator
Clutch
Braking
Gear changing
Use of gears
Steering
Department at wheel
Reversing
Hill start

Traffic observation
Adequate progress
Obstructing other vehicles
Positioning
Observance of speed limits
Pedestrian crossings – Obedience – Observance
Method of approach
Distance observation
Correct use of speed
Consideration of other road users
Overtaking
Hazard procedure and cornering
Use of mirrors
Signals
Use of horn
Aptitude
Restraint
Car sympathy
Commentary

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