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World of Warcraft

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World of Warcraft is a massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG) by Blizzard Entertainment. It is the fourth released game set in the fantasy *Warcraft* universe, which was first introduced by *Warcraft: Orcs & Humans* in 1994.^[6] *World of Warcraft* takes place within the *Warcraft* world of Azeroth, approximately four years after the events at the conclusion of Blizzard's previous *Warcraft* release, *Warcraft III: The Frozen Throne*.^[7] Blizzard Entertainment announced *World of Warcraft* on September 2, 2001.^[8] The game was released on November 23, 2004, on the 10th anniversary of the *Warcraft* franchise.

The first expansion set of the game, *The Burning Crusade*, was released on January 16, 2007.^[9] The second expansion set, *Wrath of the Lich King*, was released on November 13, 2008.^[10] The third expansion set, *Cataclysm*, was released on December 7, 2010. At BlizzCon in October 2010, lead producer J. Allen Brack announced that there would be a fourth expansion set for the game, though the developers did not yet know what it would be about.^[11] On October 21, 2011, the fourth expansion set of the game, *Mists of Pandaria*, was announced at BlizzCon 2011 by Chris Metzen.^[12]

With 10.2 million subscribers as of December 2011,^[13] *World of Warcraft* is currently the world's most-subscribed MMORPG,^{[10][14][15]} and holds the Guinness World Record for the most popular MMORPG by subscribers.^{[16][17][18][19]}

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Gameplay

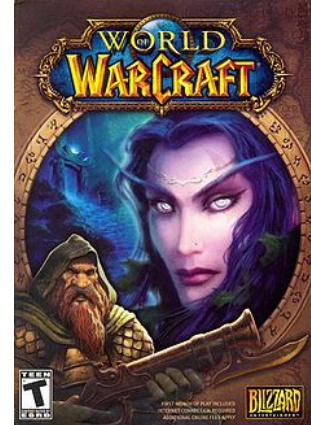
Main article: Gameplay of World of Warcraft

Starting a character or play session

As with other MMORPGs, players control a character avatar within a game world in third- or first-person view, exploring the landscape, fighting various monsters, completing quests, and interacting with non-player characters (NPCs) or other players. Also similar to other MMORPGs, *World of Warcraft* requires the player to pay for a subscription, either by buying prepaid game cards for a selected amount of playing time, or by using a credit or debit card to pay on a regular basis.^[20]

To enter the game, the player must select a realm—sometimes referred to as a server. Each realm acts as an individual copy of the game world, and falls into one of four categories. Realms are either player versus player (PvP), where open combat among players is more common and promoted, or player versus environment (PvE), where the gameplay is more focused on defeating monsters and completing quests. Roleplay (RP) and roleplay-PvP (RP-PVP) variants of both primary realm types are also available. Realms are also categorized by language, with in-game support in the language available.^[21] Players can make new characters on all realms, and it is also possible to move already established characters between realms for a fee.^[22]

World of Warcraft



Developer(s)	Blizzard Entertainment
Publisher(s)	Blizzard Entertainment ^[1]
Designer(s)	Rob Pardo, Jeff Kaplan, Tom Chilton
Composer(s)	Jason Hayes Tracy W. Bush Derek Duke Glenn Stafford
Series	<i>Warcraft</i>
Version	NA 4.3.0 (November 29, 2011) EU 4.3.0 (November 30, 2011)
Platform(s)	Mac OS X, Microsoft Windows
Release date(s)	AUS / NA November 23, 2004 EU February 11, 2005 ^[2] BR December 6, 2011 ^[3]
Genre(s)	Online role-playing game
Mode(s)	Online multiplayer
Rating(s)	ESRB: T OFLC: M ^[4] PEGI: 12+ (11+ in Finland)
Media/distribution	4 CDs (5 for the game of the year edition), 1 DVD, download

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gunds. The player selects the new character's race, such as Orcs or Trolls for the Horde, or Humans or Dwarves for the Alliance.^[23] Players must select the class for the character, with choices such as mages, warriors, and priests available.^[24] Most classes, except for special "Hero classes," are limited to particular races.

Ongoing gameplay

As characters become more developed, they gain various talents and skills, requiring the player to further define the abilities of that character.^[25] Characters can choose from a variety of professions, such as tailoring, blacksmithing, or mining. Characters can learn four secondary skills: archeology, cooking, fishing, and first-aid.^{[26][27]} Characters may form and join guilds, allowing characters within the guild access to the guild's chat channel, the guild name and optionally allowing other features, including a guild tabard, guild bank, and dues.^[28]

Much of *World of Warcraft* play involves the completion of quests. These quests, also called "tasks" or "missions", are usually available from NPCs.^[29] Quests usually reward the player with some combination of experience points, items, and in-game money. Quests allow characters to gain access to new skills and abilities, and explore new areas.^[30] It is through quests that much of the game's story is told, both through the quest's text and through scripted NPC actions.^[31] Quests are linked by a common theme, with each consecutive quest triggered by the completion of the previous, forming a quest chain. Quests commonly involve killing a number of creatures, gathering a certain number of resources, finding a difficult to locate object, speaking to various NPCs, visiting specific locations, interacting with objects in the world, or delivering an item from one place to another.

While a character can be played on its own, players can group with others to tackle more challenging content. Most end-game challenges are designed in a way that they can only be overcome while in a group. In this way, character classes are used in specific roles within a group.^{[29][32]} *World of Warcraft* uses a "rested bonus" system, increasing the rate that a character can gain experience points after the player has spent time away from the game.^[25] When a character dies, it becomes a ghost—or wisp for Night Elf characters—at a nearby graveyard.^[30] Characters can be resurrected by other characters that have the ability, or can self-resurrect by moving from the graveyard to the place where they died. If a character is past level ten and they resurrect at a graveyard, the items equipped by the character degrade, requiring in-game money and a specialist NPC to repair them. Items that have degraded heavily become unusable until they are repaired. If the location of the character's body is unreachable, they can use a special "spirit healer" NPC to resurrect at the graveyard. When the spirit healer revives a character, items equipped by the character at that time are further degraded, and the character is significantly weakened by what is in-game called "resurrection sickness" for up to ten minutes, depending on the character's level. This "resurrection sickness" does not occur and item degradation is less severe if the character revives by locating its body, or is resurrected by another player through special items or spells.^{[33][34]}

World of Warcraft contains a variety of mechanisms for player versus player (PvP) play. Players on player versus environment (PvE) servers can opt to "flag" themselves, making themselves attackable to players of the opposite faction.^[35] Depending on the mode of the realm, PvP combat between members of opposing factions is possible at almost any time or location in the game world—the only exception being the starting zones, where the PvP "flag" must be enabled by the player wishing to fight against players of the opposite faction. PvE (called normal or RP) servers, by contrast, allow a player to choose whether or not to engage in combat against other players. On both server types, there are special areas of the world where free-for-all combat is permitted. Battlegrounds, for example, are similar to dungeons: only a set number of characters can enter a single battleground, but additional copies of the battleground can be made to accommodate additional players.^[36] Each battleground has a set objective, such as capturing a flag or defeating an opposing general, that must be completed in order to win the battleground. Competing in battlegrounds rewards the character with tokens and honor points that can be used to buy armor, weapons, and other general items that can aid a player in many areas of the game. Winners get more honor and tokens than losers. However, players also earn honor when they or nearby teammates kill players in a battleground.^[35]

Setting

World of Warcraft is set in the same universe as the *Warcraft* series of real-time strategy games, and has a similar art direction.^[20] *World of Warcraft* contains elements from fantasy, steampunk, and science fiction: such as gryphons, dragons, and elves; steam-powered automata; zombies, vampires, and other undead; as well as time travel, spaceships, and alien worlds.

World of Warcraft takes place in a 3D representation of the *Warcraft* universe that players can interact with through their characters. The game world initially consisted of the two continents in Azeroth: Kalimdor and the Eastern Kingdoms. Two separate expansions later added to the game's playable area the realm of Outland and the continent of Northrend. As a player explores new locations, different routes and means of transportation become available. Players can access "flight masters" in newly discovered locations to fly to previously discovered locations in other parts of the world.^[37] Players can also use boats, zeppelins, or portals to move from one continent to another. Although the game world remains relatively similar from day to day, seasonal events reflecting real world events—such as Halloween,^[38] Christmas, Children's Week,^[35] Easter, and Midsummer—have been represented in the game world. Locations also have variable weather including, among other things, rain, snow, and dust storms.^[37]

A number of facilities are available for characters while in towns and cities. In each major city, characters can access a bank in order to deposit items, such as treasure or crafted items. Each character has access to personal bank storage with the option to purchase additional storage space using in-game gold.^[39] Additionally, guild banks are available for use by members of a guild with restrictions being set by the guild leader.^[40] Auction houses are available for players to buy and sell items to others in a similar way to online auction sites such as eBay.^[41] Players can use mailboxes, which can be found in almost every town. Mailboxes are used to collect items won at auction, and to send messages, items, and in-game money to other characters.^[25]

- Windows XP, Windows Vista or Windows 7 (32- & 64-bit supported)
- Intel Pentium 4 1.3 GHz or AMD Athlon XP 1500+
- 1 GB or more of RAM
- NVIDIA Geforce FX or ATI Radeon 9500 video card or better
- 25 GB free HD space
- 4× DVD-ROM drive (downloadable installer also available)
- Broadband Internet connection

Mac OS X

- Mac OS X 10.5.8, Mac OS X 10.6.4 or newer
- Intel processor
- 2 GB RAM or higher
- ATI or NVIDIA video card with 64 MB Video RAM or more
- 25 GB free HD space
- 4× DVD-ROM drive
- Broadband Internet connection^[5]

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others interfering. Dungeons are spread over the game world and are designed for characters of varying progression. A typical dungeon will allow up to five characters to enter as part of a group. Some dungeons require more players to group together and form a "raid" of up to forty players to face some of the most difficult challenges.^[43] As well as dungeon-based raid challenges, several creatures exist in the normal game environment that are designed for raids to attack.^{[38][44]}

Subscription

World of Warcraft requires a subscription fee to be paid to allow continued play, with options to pay in one month, three month, or six month blocks, although timecards of varying length are available both online and from traditional retailers.^[45] Expansion packs are available online, and are also available from traditional retailers. As the game client is the same regardless of the version of *World of Warcraft* the user owns, the option to purchase expansions online was added as it allowed for a quick upgrade. *World of Warcraft* has 10.3 million subscribers as of November 2011.^[46]

World of Warcraft is available as a free Starter Edition, which is free to play for an unlimited amount of time. Starter Edition characters are unable to gain experience after reaching level 20, and there are other restrictions in effect for Starter Edition accounts, including the inability to trade, use public chat channels, join guilds, or amass more than ten gold.^[47]

Development

World of Warcraft was first announced by Blizzard at the ECTS trade show in September 2001.^[48] Development of the game took roughly 4–5 years, and included extensive testing. The 3D graphics in *World of Warcraft* use elements of the proprietary graphics engine originally used in *Warcraft III*.^[48] The game was designed to be an open environment where players are allowed to do what they please.^[49] Quests are optional and were designed to help guide players, allow character development, and to spread characters across different zones to try to avoid what developers called *player collision*.^[50] The game interface allows players to customize appearance and controls, and to install add-ons and other modifications.^[51]

World of Warcraft runs natively on both Macintosh and Windows platforms. Boxed copies of the game use a hybrid CD to install the game, eliminating the need for separate Mac and Windows retail products. The game allows all users to play together, regardless of their operating system. Although there is no official version for any other platform, support for *World of Warcraft* is present in Windows API implementations Wine and CrossOver allowing the game to be played under Linux and FreeBSD.^[52]



Blizzard Launcher, also known as - Patcher or -Downloader.

Regional variations

In the United States, Canada, and Europe, Blizzard distributes *World of Warcraft* via retail software packages.^[53] The software package includes 30 days of gameplay for no additional cost. In order to continue playing after the initial 30 days, additional play time must be purchased using a credit card or prepaid game card. The minimum gameplay duration that a player can purchase is 30 days using a credit card, or 60 using a prepaid game card. A player also has the option of purchasing three or six months of gameplay at once for a 6–15% discount.^[54] In Australia, the United States, and many European countries, video game stores commonly stock the trial version of *World of Warcraft* in DVD form, which includes the game and 20 levels^[55] of gameplay, after which the player would have to upgrade to a retail account by supplying a valid credit card, or purchasing a game card as well as a retail copy of the game.

In Brazil, *World of Warcraft* was released on December 6, 2011 via BattleNet. The first three expansions are currently available, fully translated, including voice acting, into Brazilian Portuguese.^[3]

In South Korea, there is no software package or CD key requirement to activate the account. In order to play the game, however, players need to purchase time credits online via credit card or the ARS billing system. There are two kinds of time credits available: one where the player is billed based on the actual number of minutes that will be available, and one where the player can play the game for a number of days. In the former, time can be purchased in multiples of 5 hours or 30 hours, and in the latter, time can be purchased in multiples of 7 days, 1 month, or 3 months.^[56] As software packages are not required, expansion pack contents are available to all players on launch day.

In China, because a large number of the players do not own the computer they use to play games (e.g. Internet cafes), the CD keys required to create an account can be purchased independently of the software package. In order to play the game, players must also purchase prepaid game cards that can be played for 66 hours and 40 minutes.^[57] A monthly fee model is not available to players of this region. The Chinese government and NetEase, the licensee for *World of Warcraft* in China, have imposed a modification on Chinese versions of the game which places flesh on bare-boned skeletons and transforms dead character corpses into tidy graves. These changes were imposed by the Chinese government in an attempt to "promote a healthy and harmonious online game environment" in *World of Warcraft*.^{[58][59]} The Chinese government has delayed release of the *Wrath of the Lich King* expansion, due to what it feels is objectionable content.^[60] NetEase took over licensing of *World of Warcraft* from The9 in June 2009 following the expiration of The9's contract,^[61] and were able to secure a launch for *Wrath of the Lich King* on August 31, 2010, nearly two years after its Western release.^[62]

Post-launch development

The *World of Warcraft* launcher (referred to in press releases and the menu bar as the "Blizzard Launcher") is a program designed to act as a starting point for *World of Warcraft* players. It provides a way to launch *World of Warcraft* and starts the Blizzard updater. It was first included with the version 1.8.3 patch. The 2.1.0 patch allowed for an option to bypass the use of the launcher. Features of the launcher include news and updates for *World of Warcraft* players, access to *World of Warcraft*'s support website, access to the test version of *World of Warcraft* when it is available to test upcoming patches, updates to Warden,^[63] and

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Patch 1.9.3 added native support for Intel-powered Macs, making *World of Warcraft* a universal application. As a result of this, the minimum supported Mac OS X version has been changed to 10.3.9; *World of Warcraft* version 1.9.3 and later will not launch on older versions of Mac OS X.^[64] PowerPC architecture Macs are no longer supported since version 4.0.1.^[65]

When new content is added to the game, official system requirements may change. In version 1.12.0 the requirements for Windows were increased from requiring 256 MB to 512 MB of RAM. Official Windows 98 technical support was dropped, but the game continued to run there until version 2.2.3.^[66] Before Mists of Pandaria, World of Warcraft will officially drop support for Windows 2000.^[67]

Expansions

Main articles: World of Warcraft: The Burning Crusade, World of Warcraft: Wrath of the Lich King, World of Warcraft: Cataclysm, and World of Warcraft: Mists of Pandaria

Three optional expansions are currently available: *The Burning Crusade*, released in January 2007, *Wrath of the Lich King*, released in November 2008, and *Cataclysm*, released in December 2010. Players are not required to purchase the expansions to continue play. However, the expansion packs allow further leveling of characters beyond level 60 and access to newer content and areas. Characters cannot enter the additional regions without their respective expansion packs.

On June 28, 2011, *The Burning Crusade* was automatically applied to all previous *Warcraft* accounts, and all new *Warcraft* accounts created in the future will have *The Burning Crusade* applied at no additional cost. All *The Burning Crusade* content is now effectively part of the original game.^[68]

Audio

The soundtrack for *World of Warcraft* was composed and arranged by Jason Hayes, Tracy W. Bush, Derek Duke, and Glenn Stafford. It was released on November 23, 2004, together with the collector's edition of the game. It is sold separately on one CD in the MP3 format.

<i>World of Warcraft Soundtrack</i> tracklist		
No.	Title	Length
1.	"Legends of Azeroth" (Main title)	2:40
2.	"The Shaping of the World" (Exclusive track)	2:24
3.	"Legacy" (Exclusive track)	2:25
4.	"Song of Elune" (Exclusive track)	2:13
5.	"Echoes of the Past" (Exclusive track)	1:53
6.	"A Call to Arms"	2:18
7.	"Seasons of War" (Introduction music)	2:57
8.	"Stormwind"	2:14
9.	"Orgrimmar"	2:14
10.	"The Undercity"	2:27
11.	"Thunder Bluff"	2:35
12.	"##### assus"	2:44
13.	"Ironforge"	2:14
14.	"Elwynn Forest"	3:03
15.	"Duskwood"	6:01
16.	"Dun Morogh"	7:30
17.	"Burning Steppes"	2:26
18.	"Shimmering Flats"	4:07
19.	"Felwood"	2:37
20.	"Stranglethorn Vale"	4:12
21.	"Tanaris"	4:31
22.	"Teldrassil"	3:55
23.	"Tavern"	1:13
24.	"Moonfall"	0:48
25.	"Ruins"	1:16
26.	"Temple"	1:03
27.	"Lurking"	1:00
28.	"Sacred"	1:10
29.	"Graveyard"	1:07
30.	"War"	0:49

On January 12, 2011, Alfred Publishing produced an officially licensed sheet music series for vocalists, pianists, strings, and other instruments, *World of Warcraft Sheet Music Anthology* in solo and accompaniment formats with CD. These works include four pages of collectable artwork, and vary by number of songs included.

Reception

World of Warcraft was almost universally praised by critics upon release,^[70] following a period of high anticipation before launch.^[76] Although the game follows a similar model to—and was noted for using many familiar concepts from—the roleplaying genre,^{[20][71]} the new approaches to reducing pauses between game encounters were well liked.^[31] A common example was the approach to character death. In some previous MMORPGs, a player would suffer a high penalty for character death; in *World of Warcraft*, a player is able to recover and start playing quickly.^[20] Combat was another area where "downtime", or pauses between

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levels of interest.^[30] The concept of a "rested bonus", or increasing the rate at which a player's character gains experience, was also welcomed as a way for players to quickly catch up with their friends in progression.^[20]

Questing was described as an integral part of the game, often being used to continue a storyline or lead the player through the game.^[31] The high number of quests in each location was popular, as well as the rewards for completing them.^[20] It was felt that the range of quests removed the need for a player to "grind", or carry out repetitive tasks, in order to advance their character.^[30] Quests also require players to explore every section of the game world, potentially causing problems for social gamers or roleplayers seeking somewhere quiet.^[31] Quests that required the player to collect items from the corpses of creatures they had killed were also unpopular; the low "drop rate", or chance of finding the items, makes them feel repetitive as a high number of creatures need to be killed to complete the quest.^[30] The large number of new players in a particular area meant that there were often no creatures to kill,^[31] or that players would have to wait and take turns to kill a particular creature in order to complete a quest.^[20] Some critics mentioned that the lack of quests that required players to group made the game feel as if it were designed for solo play.^[73] Others complained that some dungeon or instanced group quests were not friendly to new players, and could take several hours to complete.^[30] Upon release, a small number of quests had software bugs that made them impossible to complete.^[20]

Characters were felt to be implemented well, with each class appearing "viable and interesting", having unique and different mechanisms,^[73] and each of the races having a distinct look and feel.^[20] Character development was also liked, with the talent mechanism offering choice to players,^[71] and profession options being praised.^[20] Character customization options were felt to be low,^[30] but the detail of character models was praised.^[76]

The appearance of the game world was praised by critics. Most popular was the fact that a player could run from one end of the continent to the other without having to pause at a "loading screen" while part of the game is retrieved from storage.^[76] The environment was described as "breathtaking". Players found it difficult to become lost, and each area in the game world had a distinct look that blended from one to the next.^[31] Critics described the environment as "a careful blend of cartoon, fantasy art, and realism".^[71] The game was found to run smoothly on a range of computer systems,^[20] although some described it as basic,^[31] and mentioned that the bloom light rendering effect can blur things.^[30] One reviewer described the ability to fly over long stretches of scenery as "very atmospheric".^[73] The user interface was liked, being described as "simple", with tooltips helping to get the player started.^[20]

The game's audio was well received, particularly the background music. By assigning music to different areas of the game world, reviewers felt that the fantasy style added to the player's immersion,^[71] and that the replay value was increased.^[30] The sounds and voices used by characters and NPCs, as well as the overall sound effects, were felt to add a "personality" to the game.^[71]

World of Warcraft won several awards from critics upon release, including *Editor's Choice* awards.^{[20][30]} In addition, it won several annual awards from the media, being described as the best game in the role-playing and MMORPG genres.^[77] The graphics and audio were also praised in the annual awards, with the cartoonish style^[78] and overall sound makeup being noted.^[79] The game was also awarded *Best Mac OS X Entertainment Product* at the 2005 Apple Design Awards.^[80] *World of Warcraft* was recognised at the 2005 Spike TV Video Game Awards where it won *Best PC Game*, *Best Multiplayer Game*, *Best RPG*, and *Most Addictive Game*.^[81] In 2008, *World of Warcraft* was honoured—along with *Neverwinter Nights* and *EverQuest*—at the 59th Annual Technology & Engineering Emmy Awards for advancing the art form of MMORPG games.^[82] In 2009, *Game Informer* ranked *World of Warcraft* 11th on their list of "The Top 200 Games of All Time".^[83]

World of Warcraft was the best-selling PC game of 2005 and 2006.^[84] As of January 22, 2008, *World of Warcraft* has more than 10 million subscribers worldwide, with more than 2 million subscribers in Europe, more than 2.5 million in North America, and about 5.5 million in Asia.^[85]

Less than two months after beginning operation of *World of Warcraft* in China on September 19, 2009, NetEase was ordered to immediately stop charging players and to cease accepting registrations.^{[86][87]} A press estimate indicated that if *World of Warcraft* were shut down in China, the loss of subscribers would have caused Activision Blizzard's earnings to fall from 65 cents per share to 60 cents per share.^[86] In April 2008, *World of Warcraft* was estimated to hold 62 percent of the MMORPG subscription market.^[88]

Corrupted Blood plague incident

Main article: Corrupted Blood incident

The Corrupted Blood plague incident was one of the first events to affect entire servers. Patch 1.7 saw the opening of Zul'Gurub, the game's first 20-player raid dungeon where players faced off against a tribe of trolls under the sway of the god Hakkar the Soulflayer. Upon engaging Hakkar, players were stricken by a debuff called "Corrupted Blood" which would periodically sap their life. The disease was passed on to other players simply by being near infected players. Originally this malady was confined within the Zul'Gurub instance, but it made its way into the outside world by way of hunter pets or warlock minions that contracted the disease.

Within hours, Corrupted Blood had completely infected major cities because of their high player concentrations. Low-level players were killed in seconds by the high-damage disease. Eventually Blizzard fixed the issue so that the plague could not exist outside of Zul'Gurub.

The Corrupted Blood plague so closely resembled the outbreak of real-world epidemics that scientists are currently looking at ways MMORPGs or other massively distributed systems can model human behavior during outbreaks. The reaction of players to the plague closely resembled previously hard-to-model aspects of human behavior that may allow researchers to more accurately predict how diseases and outbreaks spread amongst a population.^[89]

Aggregator	Score
GameRankings	92% ^[69]
Metacritic	93% ^[70]
Review scores	
Publication	Score
IUP.com	A ^[71]
<i>Edge</i>	9 out of 10 ^[72]
Eurogamer	8 out of 10 ^[73]
<i>Game Informer</i>	9.5 out of 10 ^[74]
<i>GamePro</i>	4.5 out of 5 ^[75]
<i>GamesMaster</i>	93% ^[72]
GameSpot	9.5 out of 10 ^[20]
GameSpy	★★★★ ^[31]
IGN	9.1 out of 10 ^[30]
<i>PC Gamer UK</i>	94% ^[72]

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