

LEARN TO CURL

 **SPIRIT**

 **DELIVERY**

 **SWEEPING**

 **STRATEGY**

 **WHEELCHAIR**

 **STICK**

 **BASIC RULES**



USA Curling™
dare to curl

Dare to Curl



Curling in the United States has experienced great growth in the past decade, thanks in great part to TV coverage during the Olympic Winter Games. Membership in the U.S. Curling Association has increased from just over 10,000 in 2002 to nearly 16,000 in 2013.

USA Curling currently boasts 165 member clubs in 40 states. Many of these new curling clubs are termed “arena” clubs, meaning that the clubs are housed at facilities where multiple sports are offered as opposed to a dedicated curling rink. Having existing curling arena owners embrace curling has been another significant factor in the growth of curling in the U.S. as it brought the sport to many warmer climates in southern states where curling never was played before, including South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Texas, and Arizona, just to name a few.

Some Fun Facts about Curling:

- It is generally agreed that curling was developed in Scotland in the 16th century on frozen marshes.
- Curling was first an Olympic medal sport in 1924, but did not obtain full medal status again until 1998.
- Curling is played in 48 countries worldwide. Canada leads the way with around 1 million active curlers.
- The modern curling stone is round, made of granite, and weighs about 42 pounds.
- The first known U.S. curling clubs were located in New York City, Detroit, Milwaukee, and Portage, Wis.
- Sweeping can help a stone slide up to an additional 15 feet.
- On average, an athlete can walk up to 2 miles in an 8-end game.

Brochure production is made possible through grants from the World Curling Federation and The Chicago Community Trust.



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GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP AND HONORABLE CONDUCT

Curling is a game of skill and tradition. The spirit of the game demands good sportsmanship and honorable conduct. This spirit should influence both the interpretation and application of the rules and the conduct of all participants on and off the ice. Curlers play to win, but never to humble their opponents. A true curler would prefer to lose rather than win unfairly. A curler should never attempt to distract an opponent or otherwise prevent someone from playing his or her best. No curler deliberately breaks a rule of the game or any of its traditions. If a curler inadvertently breaks a rule, he or she should immediately divulge the breach.



Curling Etiquette

- **Start with a handshake.** At the beginning of each game, greet the members of the opposing team with a handshake, tell them your name, and wish them "Good Curling!" Make sure everyone knows everyone else.
- **Finish with a handshake.** When the game is over, offer each player a hearty handshake and say, "Good game," regardless of the outcome. The winning curlers traditionally offer their counterparts some refreshment, with the opponents reciprocating.



- **Compliment a good shot.** One of the nicest curling traditions is that players and spectators compliment a good shot by either side while withholding comment on a poor shot or a competitor's misfortune.
- **Be courteous.** Avoid distracting movements when a curler is in the hack. When your team is not shooting, keep your distance and stand quietly. Sweepers should stand off to the side between the hog lines. Never walk or run across the ice when an opponent is in the hack. Avoid gathering around the hack at either end of the ice.
- **Be ready.** Get into the hack as soon as your opponent has delivered his/her rock. Keep the game moving—delays detract from the sport. Be prepared to sweep as soon as your teammate releases the rock.
- **Wait for the score.** Vice skips are the players who determine the score for each end. Other players should wait outside the house until the outcome is settled. Once decided, others may help clear the rocks.
- **Keep the ice clean.** The shoes you wear for curling should only be used for curling. Sand and grit from street shoes can ruin the ice surface. Change into a clean pair of flat, rubber-soled shoes that can grip the ice.
- **Practice on a different sheet.** Those who arrive early to throw a few rocks to practice or warm up are encouraged to do so. But, be sure to avoid using the sheet you'll be playing on.
- **Be on time.** Get to the club in time to change and warm up before the game. When you're late, you hold up the other players. If you know you'll be unavoidably late, let your team know in advance.
- **Get a sub.** There may be times when you're not able to curl as scheduled. It's your responsibility to get a substitute. Call your skip and give the name of the curler subbing for you.



ABCs of Curling Deliveries

Much of the enjoyment of curling comes from delivering a rock consistently well. Once good fundamentals are achieved, any curler will be able to enjoy club-level social games or even top-level competitive play. The degree of competition may change, but fundamentals remain the same.

The ABCs of the curling delivery are an easy way to remember fundamental delivery concepts. Each letter addresses a specific aspect of the delivery: Alignment, Balance, and Curl. While the ABCs are relevant to able-bodied, stick, and adaptive (wheelchair) deliveries, the examples below are designed to illustrate the able-bodied, four-step (base) delivery.

Alignment

Proper alignment with the target (skip's broom) is the first step in making shots. Alignment is a process that begins with a simple shot routine that includes watching the shot being called by the skip and entering the hack aligned with the target broom.



The initial position of the curler in the hack is known as "hack position" and is a very important component in whether the curler will be successful in throwing the stone on the line called by the skip, also referred to as being "on the broom."

Hack position, as well as the four steps of the delivery, is the same when using either a broom or a stabilizer as a delivery aid. Curlers choose delivery aids based on their level of comfort and success with the device.

Balance

Balance is a priority for new curlers, and it can take a lot of practice to achieve. New curlers often use drills, such as sliding with two stones, to help get the feel of balancing on the ice as they work up to the base delivery. The four steps of the base delivery, which are designed to help make balance easier to achieve, are described below:

Step 1: Forward press

The forward press is used to unstick the stone from the ice. The stone should move no more than 2-3 inches forward on the line of delivery, which is an imaginary line from the stone to the skip's broom.



Step 2: Hips up

Without moving the slider foot or stone, the curler's hips are slightly elevated with the back remaining flat. Hips should never be higher than the head as this will cause the curler to lose sight of the skip's broom. Since the skip's broom is the target, breaking the sightline makes accurate aiming difficult.



Step 3: Hips back

To build momentum for the curling slide (delivery), the entire body must move backward on the line of delivery. (In baseball, this would be where the pitcher winds-up.) This step is called “hips back” because moving the hips (in the hips up position) back behind the hack will also cause the sliding foot and the stone to move back the same amount of distance. Some body weight can then be transferred to the sliding foot to help with balance and power generation.



Tips for Step 3: Keep sliding foot flat on the ice. The toe of the sliding foot should be in-line with the heel of the foot in the hack. The stone should be pulled toward the toe of the foot in the hack. But, avoid bumping the stone into the hack foot, as that can cause the stone to move off line.

Step 4: Slide

Now it's time to slide! To begin momentum, start moving the rock forward on the line of delivery. The slider foot should immediately follow (almost simultaneously) into position under the sternum as the curler pushes out of the hack. When possible, keep the sliding foot flat on the ice to provide a stable balance point.



Curl

Each stone curls, or curves, as it proceeds down the ice based on the turn (twist) given the stone during its release. Stones will curl either clockwise or counter-clockwise. The amount of curl varies based on the ice surface and the speed of the stone. While the release happens during the slide (step 4), set-up begins in hack position. The shooter grips the handle, with the middle pads of the fingers running along the bottom of the handle, and the hand centered directly above the center of the stone. The wrist should be kept just high enough so the palm of the hand does not come in contact with the handle.



The front of the handle is turned to either the 10 o'clock or 2 o'clock position, depending on the turn requested by the skip. This position is maintained until the last several feet of the slide, at which time the shooter turns the handle toward the 12 o'clock position and releases it on the line of delivery toward the skip's broom. The stone should make approximately three rotations as it travels down the sheet.

Strategy

Strategy is the approach a team takes to curling, either on a specific shot, during a game, or over an entire season. Whatever the circumstance, have a plan and attempt to implement it. It is not enough to “play the situation.” Have a game plan and be patient—but also be flexible, as teams are often faced with having to change tactics.

Styles of Play

The **draw game** is characterized by offensive or aggressive play. Guards, raises, come-arounds, and freezes are all designed to score more than one point or to steal. The shots required are generally more difficult and riskier, requiring more finesse. Strategy becomes more complicated as more rocks are in play.

The **take-out game** is a defensive style of play in which the house is kept free of opposition rocks and the front is kept as open as possible. Conservative play is designed to keep the game close, hold a lead, or keep the opposition to one point when they have the hammer. As a result of few rocks being in play, most shots are relatively simple.





There are several variations on these two basic shots:

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Strategic Factors

There are a number of factors to consider when formulating strategy—both on the ice and off. Make sure all team members know these factors going into every situation.

ATTITUDE

Your team's attitude toward the game can influence strategy. If they prefer a cautious approach, you may opt for a take-out game leaving few rocks in play.

ABILITY

Make an objective analysis of each team member's ability to draw, take-out, and sweep before your team formulates an overall strategy. Attempt to force situations that accentuate your strengths.

YOUR OPPONENT

Think about the strengths and weaknesses of your opponent. For example, if your opponent prefers shooting take-outs to draws, consider setting up situations calling for draws.

THE FREE GUARD ZONE

The Free Guard Zone (FGZ), the area in front of the house, emphasizes the importance of a game plan more than any other factor. Simply put, if a lead's rock is in the FGZ, an opposing lead cannot remove it from play until the second is shooting. Thus, the position of lead rocks will dictate play. If the rocks are not placed strategically, the end may develop largely on situational execution.

THE END

Early in the game, it is important to keep the score close as you build your team's confidence. The early ends are generally played defensively. As the game progresses, a number of interesting and complex strategy situations will arise. Keep your game plan in mind, but be prepared to be flexible.

During the later ends, teams will have their greatest opportunity to take control of the game. By this time, you should know the ice and the opposition's ability. Implement the tactics that play to your team's strengths and your opponent's weaknesses. If you have a comfortable lead, play your rocks into (or even through) the house. Remove opposition rocks in front of the house as soon as possible. If you are behind, use the Free Guard Zone to your advantage and get as many rocks in play as possible.

The last end of a close game provides teams with their greatest strategic challenges. If they have a narrow lead, teams without the last rock advantage (the "hammer") will be faced with some interesting choices as the end unfolds. The same is true for teams with the hammer that are trailing by one. Everyone on the team should know what the objective is—to steal, to win, or to play for the extra end.

THE HAMMER

The last rock advantage gives you the opportunity to become more aggressive, especially after the first few ends. Skips will attempt to implement a strategy that will result in scoring more than one point.

Without the hammer, play tends to be more conservative. Skips will try to limit the opposition to scoring only one point.

ICE CONDITIONS

Strategies to deal with various types of ice include:

- On heavy ice, draw rocks into the house. Let your opponent try the upper-weight take-outs.
- On fast ice, establish your team's draw weight as soon as possible and keep take-outs on the quiet side. Get ready for a lot of sweeping.
- On swingy ice, take-outs are more difficult because weight and line of delivery are critical. An aggressive style of play is called for. Get your rocks in play and let your opponent shoot at them.
- On straight ice, a take-out game is encouraged. Offense can be generated with freezes and raises.

Rock Placement

THE SCORE

If your team trails by more than two points late in the game, you need rocks in play. Go to the draw game. If you lead by three or more, your objective is no longer scoring multiple points, but preventing the opposition from scoring a big end. With that in mind, keep it clean. With fewer rocks in play, you are less likely to give up more than one point in an end. When deciding where to place rocks, the most important strategic factors are the Free Guard Zone, the score, the end, and who has the hammer. The team without the hammer will tend to place rocks toward the middle of the sheet to control access to the four-foot. The team with the hammer will tend to place rocks away from the middle of the sheet to keep access to the four-foot open and create opportunities to score multiple points by "splitting the house."

Conservative strategy largely ignores the FGZ and lead rocks are placed in the house. This is often done early in the game, or when your team leads by more than two points. Aggressive strategy utilizes the FGZ, and lead rocks are placed in front of the house. This is often done once lead players have established their draw weight or when your team trails by more than two points. It's important to remember that each team's strategy is aimed at both placing rocks where they want them and preventing their opponent from doing the same.

Sweeping

Curling ice is swept in front of a moving rock. Strong, effective sweeping can significantly affect the distance a rock travels on a draw shot. Good sweeping can make a stone travel an extra ten feet or more. Sweeping can also keep a take-out traveling on a straighter path. Sweeping is what makes curling a team sport, and is often the difference between winning and losing.



Sweeping Rules

- Sweepers must keep clear of the rock at all times. A sweeper who touches a rock with the broom has “burned” the rock, and the sweeper must remove it from play.
- A team may sweep its rocks at any time.
- Behind the tee line, only one player from the playing team may sweep a rock.
- The opposing skip or acting skip may also sweep an opponent’s rock behind the tee line.
- The sweeping motion is in a side-to-side direction (it need not cover the entire width of the stone), deposits no debris in front of a moving stone, and finishes to either side of the stone.

Effectiveness

Sweeping effectiveness is a function of three elements: coverage, speed, and pressure.

BODY POSITION & COVERAGE

Sweepers should position themselves behind the back line and to the outside of the sheet before the shooter begins the delivery; ideally, one sweeper is on one side and one is on the other. This position promotes pre-shot communications with the shooter. It also puts sweepers in the position to sweep immediately, if necessary. (New curlers typically start sweeping closer to the hog line). Efficient sweepers pay attention to the rock's running path. Only a portion of the rock—the five-inch running edge—is actually in contact with the ice. Any excessive movement of the broom outside of the rock's path is wasted energy. Visualize which area of the ice the rock will travel, then make sure your sweeping motion covers that area. A brush head that swivels into a position perpendicular to the rock is most effective.

SPEED AND PRESSURE

Broom speed and pressure create friction and warm the ice, thereby, affecting the ice surface. This change in ice condition impacts both the speed and the curl of a stone. Focus on putting as much pressure as possible on the broom and keep your body as erect as possible with all of your upper body weight being applied down the shaft of the broom and onto the ice. Combining this pressure with maximum side-to-side sweeping velocity will produce maximum friction and positive results.

Communication

SWEEPING TIPS

- *Look up when sweeping. Be aware of where you are and what the situation is at all times.*
- *Removing your slider and putting a gripper over your sliding foot while sweeping is safer and can be more effective since it promotes better balance and allows the sweeper to apply more pressure.*
- *Sweep constantly to keep the ice clean but only apply pressure when necessary to make the shot. Stop sweeping completely when the skip calls you off. Also clean the line of delivery before every shot, especially from the hack to just beyond the near hog line.*
 - *Stay with the rock until it comes to a complete stop.*
 - *Be prepared for alternate shot calls from the skip.*

Judgment

Effectiveness is a crucial component of sweeping, but it is even more important to be able to judge when to sweep. After all, sweeping a draw shot right through the house does not make a person a capable sweeper. Those who know when to sweep are valuable members of a team. The skip is typically the person who calls for sweeping on takeouts since they are in the best position to read the line of the shot (wide or narrow) and the amount of curl that is taking place. Shooters may also assist in calling for sweeping for the line.

Sweepers are usually in the best position to judge the speed or weight of a draw and to know if a shot is too light and should, therefore, be swept. The shooter should communicate their “feel” of the shot upon release. As a rock nears the house, the skip’s position as a judge of weight improves and they also become able to call for sweeping on draw shots. Sweepers must be assertive and should not wait for sweeping instructions on draw shots.

Judge the weight (speed) of the rock as early as possible, in some cases before it is released. Study all shots—your team’s and your opponent’s—so you’ll get a better “feel” for the ice.

A sweeper must observe the distance the rock needs to travel, the speed of the rock, and—most importantly—the rate at which the rock is slowing down. Sweepers have the best perspective on the weight of the stone. It is their responsibility to judge weight and sweep draws to the spot the skip called for.

TIMING ROCKS

An aid in developing weight control is using a stopwatch during the game to time shots. A common method of timing rocks is to start the stopwatch at the moment the rock crosses the near hog-line and let it run until the rock comes to rest at the far tee-line. The longer it takes for the rock to reach its destination, the keener the ice is and less weight is needed. On the other hand, the less time it takes for the shot to get there, the heavier the ice, and the rock will have to be thrown harder. Timing shots gives all team members a shared idea of draw weight. Typical times range from 22 to 24 seconds.

An alternative method—called interval timing—gives feedback for a shot in progress. It measures the time from the rock passing over the near back-line to the near hog-line. The shorter the time interval, the faster the rock is traveling, and sweeping may not be required. Conversely, the longer the time interval, the slower the rock is traveling, and sweeping may be required. Typical times range from 2.7 to 4.0 seconds.

Timing take-outs during practice, typically from hog-line to hog-line, can also be beneficial. If all team members are able to throw similar take-out weights, a skip’s job is much easier.

Sweepers and the skip should maintain communication on every shot. Use a few routine words to cover the types of sweep calls (hurry, whoa, yes, no, line, room, light, heavy, etc.). Know what shot is called and where the broom is placed. Skips are usually very good at letting sweepers know if the rock needs to be swept for line. Likewise, sweepers should call out the weight of the shot upon release and as it progresses down the ice.



Wheelchair

Organized wheelchair curling in the United States began in the 1990s at the Granite Curling Club in Seattle. The sport relies upon skill and strategy with minor rules modifications from the original sport. Wheelchair curling athletes can play in leagues or compete to represent the United States at the World Wheelchair Championships and the Paralympic Winter Games. While many clubs are wheelchair accessible, others still need modifications to offer wheelchair curling.

Equipment & Rules

Wheelchair: Each curler must supply his or her own wheelchair with a functional set of wheel locks. The locks are critical for the safe delivery of the rock. The wheels and footrests need to be wiped clean prior to going on the ice.

Seatbelt: For some curlers, a seat belt may be necessary to anchor the curler's upper body in the chair. A 3-inch wide regular tie-down seatbelt is best. The curler is the best judge in determining the necessity of a seat belt.

Wheels: In addition to cleaning the wheels, it is important to let the wheels cool down before beginning play. Move the wheelchair to the ice surface between the backboard and the back line and let the wheels cool to ice temperature for about five minutes.

Delivery stick: Wheelchair curlers should use a delivery stick for throwing the stone. There are several models available. Most wheelchair curlers prefer the buddy system when delivering the stone. However, a rubber throwing mat or wedge also may be used in some instances.

Rules:

- The WCF rules of play shall apply.
- Each game shall be played over eight ends with an extra end to be played should the teams be tied.
- No sweeping is permitted.
- At the World Wheelchair Curling Championships, teams must be made up of mixed gender.
- Stones must be clearly released from the hand or cue before the stone reaches the nearer hog line.

Instruction

After you have cleaned the wheels, moved the wheelchairs to the cool-down area, and conducted a brief on-ice orientation of the ice sheet, lines, scoring and basic etiquette, the last step is teaching how to deliver the stone from a wheelchair. There are three types of deliveries that a person in a wheelchair can use:

- The **one-handed delivery over the side** of the wheelchair.
- The **two-handed delivery with the delivery stick** held right in front of the wheelchair.
- The **one-handed delivery with the delivery stick held to the side** of the chair.

One-handed delivery: This delivery has the curlers grasping the handle of the rock in their hand while leaning over the side of the wheelchair. Since the arm thrust generates the rock's momentum, this technique is only for the athlete with a long, strong arm and good control of the hand. Only a few wheelchair curlers will have success with this type of delivery; however, it should be demonstrated as an option. Delivery with a stick is the recommended method.

One-handed delivery with the stick: In this delivery method, the curler delivers the stone using a delivery stick held in one hand at the side of the wheelchair in a manner similar to the stand up delivery with a stick. Most individuals find the most consistency using this technique. It allows for better line of delivery, better weight control and smoother release of the rock. The delivery with this method is similar to the stand up stick delivery with the exception that the wheelchair curler does not move forward while delivering. Pulling the rock back slightly and pushing it forward generates the momentum or force.

The two-handed delivery with the stick: The curler grasps a delivery stick in both hands. The rock is in front of the chair, centered with the curler's body. The delivery is then a two-handed "thrust" of the rock with the delivery stick, imparting the turn at the point of release. This technique may work for those curlers who do not have the strength to use the one-handed delivery. This delivery is constantly changing the angle

between the stick and the ice. It makes a smooth delivery difficult and line of delivery is very inconsistent.

Each curler should try all three delivery techniques to see which best suits his or her physical abilities. The one-handed delivery will usually give the most consistent results.





The “stick” was introduced to allow curlers to deliver the rock without using a sliding delivery. The stick is a term used to identify any device that extends from the curler’s hand to the rock while delivering. Sound curling delivery with the stick requires correct aim and “weight,” just like the sliding delivery.

RULES

- Right-handed players shall play from the hack on the left of the center line, and left-handed players from the hack on the right of the center line.
- The delivery stick may not be used in any USCA national championship or any qualifying event, except wheelchair events.
- Players choosing to deliver with a delivery stick must use that device for the delivery of all their stones during the entire game.
- The stone must be delivered along a straight line from the hack to the intended target and must be clearly released from the delivery stick before the stone has reached the hogline at the delivering end.
- A delivery stick shall not convey any mechanical advantage other than acting as an extension of the arm/hand.

ALIGNMENT

Alignment refers to how you set up in the hack. Think of the stick as an extension of your arm and deliver the stone with a straight release like the sliding delivery.

- Place foot in hack with shoulders square to the skip’s broom. Using the broom in opposite hand for balance is a personal preference; some find it unnecessary.
- Extend the stick straight out from body with arm slightly bent or relaxed.

DELIVERY

The delivery is the walk from the hack to the release point, an arm extension to impart additional speed on the stone (if necessary), and putting a turn on the handle. As in sliding, the shooter should attempt to eliminate any side-to-side movements and deliver the stone straight toward the skip’s broom. The speed of the stone at the point of delivery is determined by a combination of walking speed plus some amount of arm extension during the last few feet of the delivery. The shooter’s walking speed increases slightly for takeouts versus draws but arm extension is also a primary speed generator on “heavy” ice or when shooting a takeout. As is the case for non-stick curlers, the release is critical to shot-making. Care must be taken to impart the turn strictly with the wrist rather than by an arm twist which will cause the rock to be turned off-line rather than continuing to travel straight up the imaginary line from the starting point toward the skip’s broom.

RELEASE

The rock is released during the last few feet of the delivery. Until that time, the throwing arm remains slightly bent with the stick in the 2 o'clock or 10 o'clock position.

Counter-clockwise turn:

For this turn, align stick to the 2 o'clock position.



Clockwise turn: For this turn, align stick to the 10 o'clock position.

***Counter-clockwise turn:** At the release point, turn the handle from the 2 o'clock position to 12 o'clock and simultaneously extend the shooting arm and gently roll the wrist counter-clockwise with the hand finishing in the "handshake" position.

***Clockwise turn:** At the release point, turn the handle from the 10 o'clock position to 12 o'clock and simultaneously extend the shooting arm and rotate the wrist clockwise with the hand finishing in the "handshake" position.

WEIGHT CONTROL

Weight control is the key to mastering the use of the stick. Many stick users will say that it is easier to hit the skip's broom using the stick than finding the correct weight, especially draw weight.

Tips:

- *Move with a continuous fluid forward motion with a smooth release.*
- *Avoid coming to an abrupt stop and then pushing the stone.*
- *Walk more quickly on a takeout to avoid the need for excessive arm extension to generate rock speed, thereby reducing the tendency to push the rock and miss the broom.*



Important Rules

Teams:

A team is composed of four players. Each player delivers two stones in consecutive order in each end, while alternating with an opponent.

Scoring:

At the completion of an end, a team scores one point for each of its own stones located in or touching the house that are closer to the tee than any stone of the opposition.

Stones:

- A rock must finish inside the inner edge (closest to the rings) of the hogline to be in play, except when it has hit another rock in play.
- A rock that completely crosses the backline or touches the sideboard or sideline is taken out of play.

Delivery:

- A stone must be clearly released from the hand before it reaches the hogline at the delivering end. If the player fails to do so, the stone is immediately removed from play by the delivering team.
- A stone that has not been released from the player's hand may be returned to the hack and re-delivered as long as it has not reached to the teeline at the delivery end.

Free Guard Rule:

Until four stones have been played (two from each side), stones in the Free Guard Zone (those stones left in the area between the hog and tee lines, excluding the house) may not be removed by an opponent's stone. If the stones are removed, they are replaced to where they were before the shot was thrown, and the opponent's stone is removed from play and cannot be replayed.

Measuring:

- Measurements shall be taken from the button to the nearest part of the stone.
- No physical device may be used in measuring stones until the last rock of the end has come to rest, except to determine if one of the first two stones of an end is in the rings or the Free Guard Zone.
- If there is any doubt between the two opposing skips as to whether one of the first two stones of an end finishes in the Free Guard Zone, then a measuring device may be used to device the matter.

Equipment:

- No player shall cause damage to the ice surface by means of equipment, hand prints, or body prints.
- No player shall use any footwear or equipment that may damage the surface of the ice.

****See www.usacurl.org for a complete list of rules.****

Notes

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