

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 23 Issue 06 2015-02-06

Meeting the Minds

Interviewing AU Educators

Hands Off!

The Body-Tech Connection

Ready for Re-Orientation?

New to AU or AU New to You?

Plus:

*The Travelling Student
Maghreb Voices
and much more!*



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Magazine

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



We love to hear from you! Send your questions and comments to voice@voicemagazine.org, and please indicate if we may publish your letter.

Correction Notice

Recently, the Voice Magazine ran a two part interview with musician, Mehmet Polat. It was brought to our attention that we mistakenly misspelled his name, and consequently the name of his group through-out both articles. We want to present our humblest apologies, and suggest to Voice Readers that if you were searching for the various works we referenced by this artist to please do so again, but this time with the correct spelling of his name "Mehmet Polat".

-Karl

EDITORIAL

Karl Low



No Duty to Live

The big story in the news this morning is the Supreme Court's announcement that while the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms gives Canadians a Right to Life, it does not impose upon Canadians a Duty to Live. The context, of course, is the issue of assisted suicide.

In brief, the BC Civil Liberties Association took up the case of Kay Carter and Gloria Taylor, who sued for the right to have a doctor assist them with their suicide, as their degenerative illnesses would have prevented them from being able to do so on their own. At the end of a long road, the Supreme Court agreed in a ruling signed by all nine judges, that in cases of grievous and irremediable medical conditions, not allowing them to seek assistance in the matter of their own death was discriminatory and against the Charter. It was also very clear in that the person must be able to provide informed consent to the procedure.

It did not, however, go on to define exactly what constitutes grievous and irremediable, saying that the lower courts have enough expertise to be able to deal with that question should it arise, including the issue as to whether depression or other mental difficulties could be classified as grievous and irremediable. This has some parties concerned that it could lead to "suicide-on-demand", but a similar lack of legalities exist around third trimester abortions, yet these almost never happen, simply because the legalities (both on this issue and abortion) allow doctors to use their conscience in deciding whether to engage in these procedures. It's given the government a year to come up with alternative legislation to better deal with the issue of assisted suicide if it so wishes, but otherwise, the court's ruling will essentially become the law of the land.

Personally, my feelings on this ruling can be summed up as "huzzah" and it comes as a nice cap to the week as many of the articles in this issue of The Voice Magazine touch on the issue of the power of individuals. From our feature interview with Dr. Jon Dron, whose innovative teaching method requires that the student be mostly in charge of their own learning, to the Primal Numbers column that looks at a new technology that could be both an amazing boon and a horrible nightmare at the exact same time. The idea of a person being in control of their own body and mental state being sacrosanct seems to be coming closer to reality with each passing year.

And while I'm actually a large supporter of the idea that citizens of a society have a duty to the public of that society, that duty ends where it compromises what a person can or cannot do with their own body. So having to do a long form census? That, to me, fits in with the idea of jury duty, or getting a social insurance number, or paying taxes. It's something that we do to better our society that provides so many opportunities and safeguards for us. Being required to live beyond the point in time where you feel comfortable doing so? That's nobody else's business but my own, even my family, ultimately, should have no say in the matter (although if a person doesn't consider the feelings and well-being of those they care about before going through with something like that, they're a dick.

Enjoy the read!

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karl'.

MEETING THE MINDS

INTERVIEWS with AU's EDUCATORS



Marie: You're an award winning professor for a Teaching Fellowship? What do you think were the forefront variables that led to you being the recipient?

Dr. Dron: I was among the relatively early recipients of a National Teaching Fellowship, a lifelong award given yearly by the Higher Education Academy in the UK to a small selection of those nominated by their universities as outstanding teachers. I was the first one ever to receive the award from my then-university but I was no more deserving of it than a great many others who were at least as good or better than I was as a teacher.

I am quite proud of it, though it did seem a bit unfair and slightly arbitrary then. It still does. It was good for me though. My university's faith in me, their nomination, and the support they gave, was a great boost to my confidence in what I was trying to achieve. I had, until then, always

felt on the fringes of educational practice and did things that, though I thought they made sense and could back them up with firm research and theory, were not readily accepted by some of my colleagues. The award, along with a few nods here and there for my research and the support of colleagues that I am in awe of here at AU, has helped me to feel more assured that I am at least on a sensible path. People are more inclined to at least listen to what I have to say now, even if they still disagree sometimes.

Marie: Everyone wants to know, at least by the end of this interview: What classes are you teaching and for which ones are you the course designer?

Dr. Dron: I'm running six courses right now. Four of these I designed 'myself' (though course design at AU is always a team effort so it would be wrong of me to claim full authorship—we work as a team, not as auteurs here): at the undergraduate level these are Web Programming (COMP 266), Web Server Management (COMP 470) and Social Aspects of Games (COMP 282); at graduate level Enterprise Information Management (COMP 602). I'm also running two courses on games (COMP 283) and green computing (COMP 635) designed by others. I am (again largely) responsible for two graduate courses that I will be running again later in the year— Ethical , Legal and Social Issues in Information Technology (COMP 607), and Social Computing (COMP 650).

Marie: You have an innovative pedagogy, and may be a leader in the implementation of a more compassionate approach to marking and teaching. What are the most salient themes of your pedagogy?

Dr. Dron: My teaching is guided by many pedagogical theories. I pick and choose according to what works and what fits, rather than adhering religiously to a particular model. That said, the two things that are probably most salient in all courses I design are firstly giving control to students, and secondly respecting and utilizing the knowledge students bring to the learning community—using the wisdom in and of the crowd, if you like. By

'giving control' I don't just mean giving *choices* to students. Giving choices to people without ensuring that they have the knowledge or support to make them wisely is at least as bad as giving them no choice at all. It's about letting students make *informed* choices and, if they wish, delegating some of those choices to others, whether they be to other students, teachers, Wikipedia or textbooks. I try to make sure that no student ever takes the same path to knowledge as any other—as much as possible, students choose what they do, how they do it, and what matters to them about it. That makes it more interesting to them and also to me—I am easily distracted, so variety keeps me interested in what they are doing, which helps me remain enthused as well as them.

The social element is crucially important too: there is never just a single teacher in a learning transaction—teachers, book authors, other students, web sites, video, etc, and, of course, the learners themselves are all significant teachers. We learn with and from countless others, whether through imitation, inspiration, disagreement, reinforcement or whatever, and other people give meaning and value to what we do. On all my courses, students are explicitly teachers too as, apart from anything else, there is no better way to learn than to teach. I design processes that give them as much freedom as they desire to engage or not with others but, simply by performing the requested activities on the course, they share knowledge with their peers, as a natural offshoot of the process. If they make other contributions beyond the basic sharing requested, like helping others solve problems, they can use those as evidence of success too, but they do not have to do so: it is under their control.

I also like to try to provide *meaningful* challenges—things that are both difficult and personally relevant, not just a bunch of exercises in a textbook. A lot of this has to do with motivation: in a perfect world I would never exert any extrinsic control over any of the process, and students would do my courses for the love of it, never for grades. However, I am required to make judgements, so I make that happen only at the end, I try to make it a formative and engaging learning process quite apart from its role in assessment, and I give as much freedom as I can to allow students to demonstrate their competence in whatever ways suit them best. Typically, I use portfolios of compiled evidence and reflections on the process for that, because the process of compiling them is itself a learning activity with great value.

Marie: What thought goes into your highly original course design?

Dr. Dron: It's mostly just tinkering and exploring the borders of the adjacent possible. I'll grab ideas and inspirations from anywhere and anything, and I get inspired by the oddest of things, from watching hockey to listening to conversations on a bus. I describe myself as a professional learner (great job!) so I am always on the lookout for ideas and tend to daydream and reflect a lot about my own learning, especially in areas unrelated to the one at hand. I see the design process as a conversation, involving things like technology platforms, theories, and models, as much as with other people.

Marie: What do you think is the role of multimedia and social media in your course design?

Dr. Dron: Well, my courses couldn't happen without social media of some kind: social media are learning media. We learn from and with others, so having multiple channels, especially those that connect many people, is a good idea. It brings challenge, inspiration, and alternative perspectives, as well as reducing the isolation. I am a fan of avoiding rigid course boundaries—the greater the diversity, the better, especially due to the opportunities for serendipitous encounters and discoveries, and social media provide the means to move beyond the course. But, as ever, it should be under the control of learners: except when it is the topic of study, I would never force students to enter spaces they may perceive as unsafe. But, for those willing to cross the boundaries, not only do they gain a lot themselves, but they bring something back to those who prefer to remain within them.

Marie: How do you encourage student motivation in the online class environment?

Dr. Dron: I am a fan of self-determination theory. A theory that posits that the necessary (though perhaps not sufficient) conditions of intrinsic motivation are to feel in control, to feel challenged (but not beyond one's competence), and to feel relatedness with others. Basically, I provide as many ways as possible to support those needs, and try to avoid any actions or activities that inhibit them. While the relationship between intrinsic motivation (doing something because you like to do it) and extrinsic motivation (doing something for some reason beyond the satisfaction of doing it) is complex, on the whole the evidence is clear that extrinsic motivation applied in teaching massively reduces intrinsic motivation, if not entirely killing it altogether. Sure, a punishment or reward may push you to do some unpleasant task that you might not otherwise do, but, as soon as that punishment or reward goes away, so does the perceived need or wish to perform the task. There is nothing more natural than to learn—we are built to love it. So, notwithstanding the very rare occasion where a bit of a stick or carrot might help to overcome a hurdle or, for example, to learn a repetitive bit of behaviour, I try to create the conditions where people can learn because it excites them to do so. As a teacher, I do feel I have a role in this beyond just creating content. When it goes right (and often doesn't!) I try to help a bit though my own behaviour—if I am passionate and enthusiastic, and demonstrate caring about both the subject and the student, then that helps a lot with the relatedness aspects of motivation, as well as modelling ways of thinking that might help learners to realize why it is of value to them and want to discover more. That's another reason I like to involve students in helping one another, though, as I can only go so far and am (very) fallible. The more people that are involved, the more chance there is of being inspired, enthused, or excited. I'm afraid I often fail—it is difficult to sustain enthusiasm and, like most academics, I get very busy at times, so it is not uncommon for me to fail to respond quickly enough. But I do try!

Student Sizzle AU's Hot Social Media Topics

Following what's hot around AU's social media sites.

AUSU Student Forums

In the General Student Chat forum, user "Chasingstars" wonders if there are any AU students living in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Other topics include study partners for HR, and courses ENGL 353 and ORGB 364.

AthaU Facebook Group

Michelle seeks feedback on course WGST 425, *Feminist Family Therapy*. Roxie wants to know how close to her exam date she can submit a final assignment. Ravi seeks clarification on whether the ten-day leeway period after the original exam write date is still valid if it means writing the exam after the contract end date.

Other postings include getting professor permission to register for a course, e-texts, missing marks, and courses EDUC 406, ENGL 255, ENGL 305, IDRL 309 and MGSC 312.

Twitter

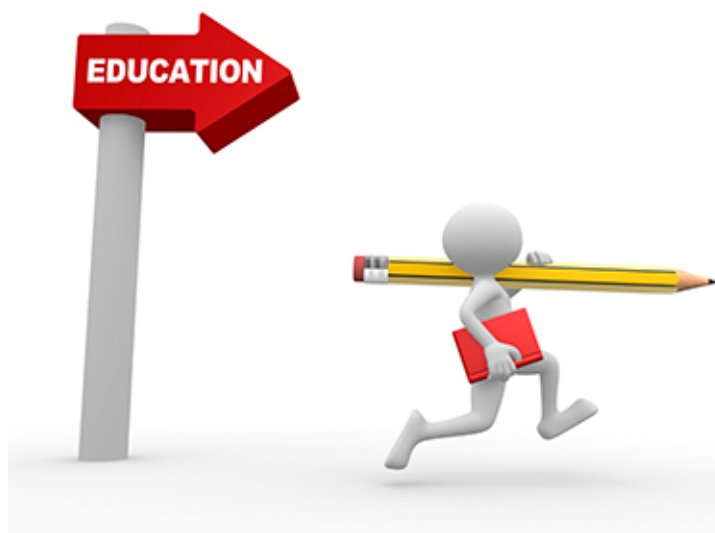
@AthabascaU tweets "Have you heard that our online student orientation has been re-launched? Check it out! <http://iamau.ca/167CIEQ>"

In a separate tweet, @AthabascaU reminds students and prospective students that "you ALWAYS have access to our counselling services <http://t.co/AKzpN41IVt>."



Ready for some Re-Orientation?

Barabara Lehtiniemi



Athabasca University recently announced the launch of an updated and revised online Undergraduate Student Orientation.

Aimed primarily at new and prospective students, the Student Orientation Handbook contains a wealth of information for current students, too.

The handbook's structure is similar to an AU online study guide. The chapter titles and subsection headings run down the left-hand side of the screen. Like a study guide, one subsection is displayed at a time and arrows are used to move to the next—or previous—section.

It takes about 45 minutes to read through the entire 7-chapter orientation. Because the subsections are listed on each screen, you can save time by selecting sections of interest to you instead of following the arrows to each subsequent screen. Each subsection summarizes its topic and contains links to in-depth information on either AU's or external sites. Caution: unless you have endless time, be judicious on which links you click on; I opened selected links in a different tab to read later.

The Student Orientation is presented in seven chapters or modules. A summary of each, as well as the approximate time to read (not including links,) follows:

Chapter 1 - About Athabasca University (5 minutes.) As a current student, you can easily skip or skim most of this. But the section on AU's Service Standards is worth reviewing: if you've ever found yourself drumming your fingers waiting for an essay or exam to be marked, you'll find the link on this page worth bookmarking.

Chapter 2 - Application, Course Registration, and Other Student Processes (10 minutes.) Most of this section is worth a review, although current students can perhaps skip the How do I Become an AU Student? subsection. Other subsections provide valuable information on auditing or challenging a course, obtaining a refund, withdrawing from a course, and extending a course.

Chapter 3 - Advising Services (8 minutes.) If you haven't used advising services at AU yet, you'll find helpful information in this chapter on what advising services can do for you. Additionally, this chapter provides information on Transfer Credit, PLAR, DegreeWorks, and your Application to Graduate.

Chapter 4 - Important Policy Information (3 minutes.) You're probably already familiar with the "Academic Misconduct Policy," the "Non-Academic Misconduct Policy," and the "Student Appeals Policy" (but if you're not, you can—and should—read about them here.) The Other Important Policies at AU subsection contains policies you may be less-familiar with, including the "Course Extension Policy," the "Policy for Students with Disabilities," the "Undergraduate Grading Policy," and the "Undergraduate Transfer Policy," among others.

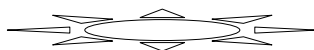
Chapter 5 - Student Support Services (7 minutes.) Even if you don't need them—now—it's a good idea to be familiar with the support services available. Each subsection summarizes a group of services available to students, from The AU Information Centre to the Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Research.

Chapter 6 - Financial Planning, Student Financial Assistance, and AU's Student Awards Program (8 minutes.) Unless you've got boodles of bucks, you're sure to find something helpful here: information on loans, scholarships, budgeting, and dipping into RSPs to finance your education.

Chapter 7 - Exams at AU (5 minutes.) Most helpful for new students and those who haven't written an exam in a while, this final chapter also contains information relevant to all students. Supplemental Exams, anyone? How about Exam Anxiety?

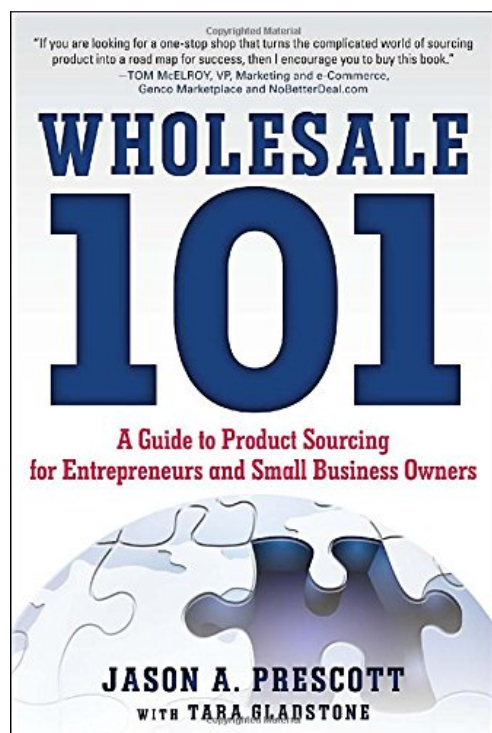
The Undergraduate Student Orientation Handbook offers the current student a meaningful review of AU's procedures and services. It also serves as a one-stop student shopping mall, with portals to almost every bit of information an AU student could wish to know. I found it easy to read, helpful to review, and worthy of bookmarking.

Barbara Lehtiniemi is a writer, photographer, and AU student. She lives on a windswept rural road in Eastern Ontario



The Career Path

Marie Well



Making Money through Drop-Shipping and Other Wholesale Ideas

One of my aims as a Voice writer is to groom AU students for entrepreneurial activity or, on a smaller scale, money-making initiatives to help offset costs of university and daily living. In light of this objective, I recently scoured the pages of a book titled *Wholesale 101*, by Jason A. Prescott, that provided ammunition for some student investment ideas. The most salient ideas, in my mind, included drop-shipping for ecommerce platforms such as EBay and Amazon, developing unique products, and becoming a manufacturer's representative.

Drop-Shipping for Ecommerce Platforms

Drop-shipping is essentially having manufacturers, distributors, third party drop-shippers, or the like fulfill the orders your customers make by storing, packaging, and shipping the products on your behalf. Drop-shipping can be likened to a pay-on-demand service, where the order is fulfilled on a one-off basis, or as the individual product is ordered. Drop-shippers charge you fees that can range from monthly fees to access their service to basic wholesale charges per product, yet you still stand to make a profit depending on your mark-up price when you make the actual sale.

While drop-shipping from overseas may bear issues such as communication breakdowns and lack of physical factory contact, an alternative is to go through a third party drop-shipper. Prescott (2013) mentions a number

of third-party drop-shippers, including www.doba.com, <http://koleimports.com>, www.worldwidebrands.com, <http://handbagswholesale.com>, and a variety of others.

In order to glean more insight into how third-party drop-shipping could be better integrated into either online ecommerce storefronts or even Amazon site, I decided to contact a third-party drop shipper via telephone and to examine their Website.

Initially, I looked at Doba's Website. Doba touts over 2,000,000 products for you to choose to sell. You can sell these products on eBay or Amazon or your own Website, without physically ever possessing the product. Doba will provide you with photos and detailed descriptions. Once the product is purchased by someone who buys from you, you log into your Doba account and pay the wholesale cost for the actual product. All you need is the shipping address of the customer to enter into the Doba interface. You don't do the shipping. You don't have any inventory. You don't have to worry about returns. You do have to worry about membership fees, however.

I signed onto the site for a trial membership, and discovered in step three, prior to being able to access the catalogue of nearly two million products, Doba requires you to enter a credit card that will automatically be charged \$59.99 per month once the trial membership is over. So, the volume of sales profit you anticipate making per month should at least, as you are well aware, exceed that \$59.99 membership cost.

One of the suggestions on Doba's Website is to build your own eCommerce store, using a platform such as Shopify, focusing on products aligned with your personal passions or interests. This could be a means for a specialized product focus, although simply selling on EBay or Amazon—only paying after you make the sale—might be less expensive alternatives.

Developing Unique Products

For those students wanting to make and sell their own product lines, the Doba representative on the phone indicated that small suppliers were welcome to fill out a form to see if they would qualify for their products to be listed on Doba. If listed, retailers will have the option to choose your product to sell on their sites, on EBay, or on Amazon. Doba indicated that original products—that don't compete in stores such as Walmart—are preferred.

I noticed that the Doba site features a number of books that sellers can retail. So, out of curiosity, I contacted them with an email inquiring as to whether or not a small single author book manufacturer might be considered as a supplier through their service. In the process of inquiring, it occurred to me that a print run of several thousand books could be made, and the books could be stored in an indoor storage service with possibly an elevated wooden platform for added security. I am currently awaiting Doba's response.

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On one hand, acting as your own supplier for small ticket items might be ideal for making possibly a five-bagger return (or, in other words, a five-fold profit, in stock market speak). On the other hand, you will be married to the job of product fulfillment and drop shipping to buyers.

Then there is also the question of how do you gain access to packaging that brand retailers like Amazon, EBay, and similar online selling places? These online stores are places that the retailer will likely take your item to sell. You are responsible for prompt and professional fulfillment of packages to continue to qualify for the third party drop-shipper access to retailers.

Furthermore, the onus would be on you, the supplier, to perform all the drop-shipping with a wholesale pricing scheme. You won't get a lot of traction with your product unless your pricing is competitive. Some big name book titles are featured on Doba for third-party drop-shipping, and you can be assured that these book suppliers' print-runs are on a higher magnitude than that of a small-time seller, so competitive pricing needs to be well planned in advance.

Becoming a Manufacturer's Representative

If you want to start a physical store and load it up with products, such as a mall kiosk, then you certainly want access to a manufacturer's representative. These reps seek out the best and finest product lines that manufacturers have to sell as they make a commission from each sale--and having satisfied return customers is their priority (Prescott, 2013).

Yet, an alternative to making money for a student, especially if you love to travel, might very well be to apply for a manufacturer representative position. You would need to have excellent sales skills and be constantly seeking out top quality product lines from a variety of manufacturers--or at the very least, be representative of the best product lines made by the manufacturers with which your company partners.

Doing a search for "manufacturer representatives in Canada" will yield a number of results, including the company I randomly singled out called [Market Access Canada](#). Product lines they represent range from military and industrial flying robots to tablet accessories. So if selling those kinds of items to stores sounds like an interesting career, perhaps this is the type of job you're looking for.



Study Tips from a Semi-Anonymous Friend

There is nothing more that The Study Dude wants for you than to start paraphrasing at least 50% more in all of your essays.

Well, in these articles, as The Study Dude, I'll try to give you the study tips you need to help make your learning easier. I'll also give you straight and honest opinions and personal anecdotes—even the embarrassing ones that you wouldn't ever dare read about from any other study tip guru.

This article will focus on *Writing Essays for Dummies* by Mary Page and Dr. Carrie Winstanley. Contrary to the title, this book is beyond the calibre of most Dummies books and comes highly recommended by me.

How Exactly Should You Paraphrase?

I used to make cue cards, write direct quotes on them, write keywords to capture each of the quotations' meanings, group them together logically, and then string the direct quotes together with my own introductory thoughts per quote. That was the magic of writing an essay.

But, woe is me. This system, while gaining mostly A grades, came short of attaining the bigger goal of producing stellar work. You see, the ideal essay relies largely on paraphrased material and sparingly on direct quotations. I strung together lots of direct quotes, believing it added strength to my papers when I should have resorted to paraphrasing at least 75% of the quotes on the page.

But no need to worry, my beloved readers, as Page and Winstanley (2009) have solid advice on how to properly paraphrase your materials:

- The joy of paraphrasing is converting a direct quotation into your own thought: "make it your own" (p. 121)
- The length of paraphrased material will inevitably be much longer than the original direct quotation
- Things to avoid paraphrasing are as follows: "job titles, names of people and places, dates and many numbers" (p. 121)
- Take the direct quotation, identify all the keywords (including verbs and even adjectives and adverbs), and seek out synonyms in your thesaurus
- Change the word form, such that the word "employee" becomes "employer" or "employment" and so forth. This will alter the structure of the sentence to give it your own unique flare.
- Change verbs to nouns and vice-versa (for instance, "to study" becomes "the study")
- Finally, insert both the in-text reference and bibliographic entry.

As an afterthought, I thought it might be wise to write direct quotations on a cue card, and, underneath or on the backside, include a paraphrased version as you encounter each quote in the literature. That way, the quote is fresh and you can better ensure that you capture the intended meaning in the paraphrased material. Plus, keeping the original direct quotation also helps to guarantee that the context doesn't get misconstrued. This system might mean more work, but may be worth the time investment in the long run.

How to Master the Paragraph

Writing a paragraph is easy when you have your direct quotations/paraphrased materials in a logical order and well-planned groupings. Yet, there is a magic formula for making them flow seamlessly and for ensuring that each paragraph pertains to a single topic.

Page and Winstanley (2009) have a brilliant system for making your paragraphs flow meaningfully:

- Have, at the bare minimum, three sentences per paragraph and no more than eight.
- Your page should contain somewhere between two and five paragraphs.
- Each paragraph should answer a single question. Turn that question into a topic sentence (but don't leave it as a question; make it a statement).

- Optional: Include a header for each paragraph that captures the question it answered (written as the topic sentence). This will aid you when it comes time to reorder your ideas more clearly. You will then have to delete all the headers once your essay draft is finalized.
- Provide ample support for each question in each paragraph. This support can be further details, quotes that help answer the question, definitions, comparison/contrast, cause/effect, details, background, statistics, and examples, to name a few. You will also want to include your own views, if and only if they are naturally supported by the citations. If the quotations/paraphrased materials don't inevitably lead to the view you present, then your view (so sorry!) has no place in the essay.
- If there are gaps in your information (say, you only have two sentences to respond to a paragraph question), then go ahead and collect more research to sufficiently fill in the paragraph.
- Organize the paragraphs into a logical flow.
- Finalize with a summary sentence.
- Repeat the above for each paragraph.
- Ensure that you have one and only one main idea per paragraph.
- Don't use commands or questions in your essays.
- Place your most essential points at the beginning or end of the paragraph.
- Use lots of verbs, as sentences filled with verbs make for easier reading
- Use a mix of sentence lengths: short followed by longer followed by extra long—you get the picture!

Writing the Perfect Intro

That perplexing conundrum of how to start your essay or thesis is one that leaves many students with writer's block. However, there are formulaic approaches to writing your introduction. We all know about the thesis statement, but there are other questions that your professor will ask, like "So what?" (Not to be harsh, but one of my professors asked me "so what" so many times that I was at a loss for words.) With a little ingenuity, perhaps you can come up with a "so what" answer that will be convincing, but ideally, you will want to start your essay with its relevance thought out in advance.

And what should your first sentence be? We've all heard of starting your essay with something moving, such as surprising quotes, an anecdote, a startling fact, etcetera, etcetera, but how about the zinger of rewording the assignment question with your own pizzazz—or, better yet and for a stronger paper—incorporating both a moving intro and a reworded assignment question?

Page and Winstanley (2009) have some advice to heed on writing an introduction:

- Start by taking the assignment question or title and rewording it into your own statement. Ensure that you express the main idea of the paper in the rewording. It should provide your "take" on the topic as well as relaying your understanding of the assignment.
- Possibly mention any of the critical key theorists you include in your essay.
- Answer the question "so what?" by providing context on the relevance of the essay. You can do this by expressing things, such as (1) the topic's significance as an issue unto itself, (2) how the topic has become more relevant due to other factors, (3) how over time, the topic has become more pressing, or, (4) the topic's role in a much bigger issue. These are just some basic ideas to get you started about how to think of the "so what" question.
- Think of why the topic was important from your instructor's perspective. He/she thought it was significant enough to assign, so determining why the topic is relevant from the instructor's point-of-view will help you to include the "so what?" component of the introduction.

- Show the direction that you will be going in answering the assignment question. You can do this by summarizing your key points/key answers to the assignment question.
- Give a hint of what the conclusion will relay (but don't give it all away in the introduction).
- Start your introduction with a paradox, an opposing view, or a compelling quotation, to name a few possibilities. Don't add wild and crazy facts or quotations unrelated to the crux of your argument, though. Keep it relevant.

So, there's nothing to fear. The Study Dude is determined to make right for you all the wrongs I made in grad school—one A+ at a time.

References

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Mindful Bard

Wanda Waterman



Album: *The Ground Beneath Our Feet*

Artist: The Knights

"We strive to play old music like it was written yesterday and inhabit new music in a way that's familiar and natural. We are serious about having fun. We thrive on camaraderie and friendship. We cultivate a collaborative environment that honors a multiplicity of voices."

- The Knights

If you can imagine the difference between a lark singing from a tree and a lark singing from the passion of its heart while soaring through the noonday sky, you may be able to imagine the difference between Bach, for example, played by any old orchestra, and Bach played by The Knights, an orchestral collective from New York City. The

collective was founded by two brothers, violinist Colin Jacobsen and cellist Eric Jacobsen, who now serve as co-artistic directors. The group's name looks a bit bland until you find out that they once called themselves "The Knights of the Many-Sided Table," at least until that name got too unwieldy.

The musicians appear to have started by getting together just to amuse themselves, but they somehow organically grew into the kind of orchestra everyone wanted to hear, garnering critical acclaim as well as opportunities for collaborations with Dawn Upshaw, Siamak Jahangiri, Mark O'Connor, Kinan Azmeh, Joshua Redman, Béla Fleck, Yo-Yo Ma, and Itzhak Perlman, among other ingenious notables.

What's their secret? The Knights shamelessly and tirelessly work toward making the concertgoer's experience as moving and engaging as possible, and they've had enormous success at this. The fact that the art world now accepts and allows such blatant crowd-pleasing, given that the inclination is traditionally to make art as difficult and dry as possible, is a wonderful sign.

Yet, as I so often say, the times they are-a-changing, and being that we are now undergoing a kind of romantic revival, it all fits. There's no Beethoven on this album, but then they did an all-Beethoven album back in 2013, so we can forgive them for leaving the quintessential romantic composer off this disk.

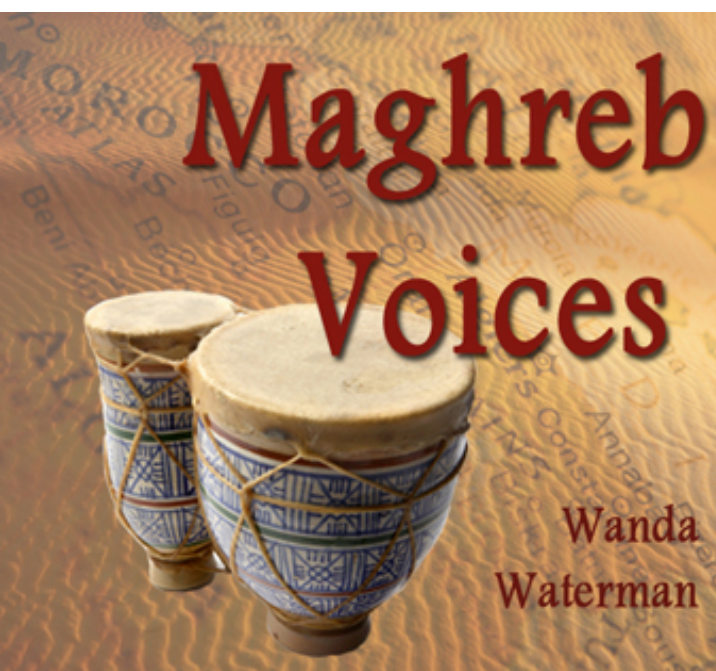
The repertoire on *The Ground Beneath Our Feet*, their seventh album, does showcase one romantic composer (Haydn), as well as taking a romantic approach to baroque music (Bach), early 20th (Stravinsky), late 20th (Steve Reich), and the 21st century, represented by Colin Jacobsen, one of the orchestra's founders, who contributes the *avant garde* composition *Concerto for Santur, Violin, and Orchestra*, a work that starts out postmodern minimalist and then develops to encompass what world music has evolved to become in its wholeness, richly complex yet authentic, assembling many disparate elements to create a magnificent musical panorama.

The title track is a gorgeously accompanied little song by the intriguing singer-songwriter Christina Courtin. I hope to be bringing you more about her at a later date. But Stravinsky's *Concerto in E-Flat Major* ("Dumbarton Oaks") at first doesn't even sound like Stravinsky; it's just so full of warmth. The fact that this album was recorded live at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D.C., the estate where Stravinsky first premiered this piece, makes its inclusion especially apt.

Bach's *Concerto for Violin and Oboe* is played in a series of passionate sighs followed by a masterfully articulated skipping, racing, and tumbling, exactly the way Bach should be played.

The Ground Beneath Our Feet manifests four of the Mindful Bard's criteria for music well worth a listen.

- It's authentic, original, and delightful.
- It provides respite from a sick and cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic endeavor.
- It inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation.
- It makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomena, making living a unique opportunity.



The Smiling Ghosts of Mides, Part IV

(Be sure to read parts [I](#), [II](#), and [III](#) of this series.)

"Whenever you're making a movie, especially when you're writing, you always have self-doubts. I did the first location shooting in Tunisia. I didn't get everything shot, but I had to get out of there in ten days regardless."

- George Lucas

We stop to look at a lovely five-star hotel that now stands abandoned; tourist numbers have dropped off because of political unrest and competition from other countries. The Jasmine Revolution, which, as many have said, was not a true revolution but rather a large-scale revolt, initiated necessary changes in the country but also set the economy back by rendering Tunisia a less desirable tourist destination.

Economic growth remains stunted; continuing reports of terrorist attacks against police, politicians, and military personnel prompt foreign governments to advise extreme caution to people considering a visit to Tunisia—especially here in the south, close to the borders with Algeria and Libya.

But tourists come, nonetheless. We visit Tozeur, often referred to as the gateway to the Sahara. It's one of the magnets for *Star Wars* fans because it was the location for Mos Espa on the planet Tataouine (if you're a *Star Wars* fan, the rolling dunes of fine sand will look achingly familiar).

We enter the town square, where a glorious pavilion of tiny lights casts its magic in the twilight over families of locals and visiting Europeans. There's a small brass band with fancy uniforms playing appalling sounds. The stalls surrounding the square display some of the most gorgeous handwoven textiles I've ever seen.

Star Wars director George Lucas said that Tunisia was the only place in the world to film the *Star Wars* series, making it a pilgrimage site for some of the most besotted film cult followings of all time, their infatuation with

the film series compelling them to ignore the threat of Islamist fundamentalists hiding out in mountains, caves, or just beyond the borders.

Even before the revolution there were issues with neighboring countries. A sandcrawler—the large cumbersome vehicle used in *Star Wars IV*—provoked complaints from the Libyan government who observed it parked a little too close to their border. The Tunisian government politely requested that Lucas move it somewhere else. Naturally, he complied as quickly as he could.

After the Jasmine Revolution, Lucas was obliged to move filming of the *Star Wars*



A 5-star hotel near Mides, now abandoned because of declining tourist numbers

series to Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates, which offered, in addition to a higher degree of safety, tax-free filming and a 30 percent cash-back rebate for cost of production. It was an offer he couldn't refuse.

But I soon learn that it's not the end of film production in Tunisia.

We eat dinner at a nice little spot in downtown Tozeur. I hear English wafting from the next table, sounding especially *dulcet* because it's one of those rare times I've heard English spoken as a native tongue here. I can't help but butt in and ask them where they're from. One is from New Zealand, one from Italy, one from England, and one is British-Tunisian. They call themselves an international assembly, claiming that a Russian has just left their company. Later I surmise from eavesdropping on their discussion that they're a film crew.

A little investigation shows that as one possible solution to its money problems the country is eager to attract more film production. It's hard to compete with nations that offer attractive incentives to cash-strapped film

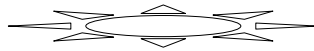
budgets, but the Tunisian landscape and historical sites are unparalleled— significant contributors to the success of blockbusters and art films at home and abroad.

I'm hoping that the presence of this little film crew here is a harbinger of good things to come. I smile to myself. Maybe the world will get to see more of this gorgeous desert wonderland, even if only on screen.

Wanda also penned the poems for the artist book They Tell My Tale to Children Now to Help Them to be Good, a collection of meditations on fairy tales, illustrated by artist Susan Malmstrom.



A pilgrim setting out on a pilgrimage to Mecca



Primal Numbers Hands Off

S.D. Livingston



In this age of constant connectivity, it can be hard not to take your work home with you. Cell phones and the Internet blur the boundary between home and office, and many bosses expect employees to respond at all hours of the day. But would you be willing to let your job literally get under your skin—as in a microchip embedded in your hand? That's the question workers at one Swiss office get to answer, and it should be a resounding no.

In theory, the premise sounds cool. As this [BBC article](#) notes, a high-tech office complex called Epicenter has offered tenants the chance to have RFID (radio-frequency

identification) chips implanted in their hands. The chips, "about the size of a grain of rice," will let people open doors, access photocopiers, and eventually pay at the building's café, all "with a touch of a hand."

No more losing keys or swipe cards. No more trying to remember the passcode for the photocopier. And you don't even need to bring your wallet with you to pay for lunch. Just swipe your hand across the reader—no need to search for cash or punch in a PIN.

But it gets better. According to Hannes Sjoblad, who's involved with developing the tech, there may come a day when "big corporates and big government come to us and say everyone should get chipped—the tax authority

chip, the Google or Facebook chip." By getting familiar with and using the technology now, his theory is that people will be more informed if that day ever comes.

Sjoblad might be right. It could be a very good idea to know the benefits and pitfalls of using the chips before the government or corporations demand that an implanted RFID is required to access their services. But there are a lot of reasons to be wary.

First, there's the simple question of biology. If an employee's implant becomes infected, who's responsible for covering sick time or medical bills? With all the recent stories about insurance companies using loopholes to get out of paying travel coverage, it's not hard to imagine health benefits being denied because the insurer claims an employee didn't care for the incision site properly.

It also raises the question of whether RFID chips might one day be mandatory to replace, say, a driver's licence or health card. Would people need to carry a special waiver to prove that their body rejected the implant?

There are also bound to be issues with the technology itself. We've all stood in line at the checkout and watched someone tap an RFID-enabled credit card. Sometimes the technology fails. There's a glitch in the chip, or maybe a problem with the reader. Perhaps it's an older card that doesn't work with the latest style of readers. The same thing can happen with access cards that open the doors to your building.

With a physical object, like a credit card or employee badge, it's easy to replace them. A chip in your hand? Time to open that incision and upgrade your hardware. I don't know about you, but I'd rather have the bank send out a replacement card than have minor surgery—no matter how minor it is.

Then there's the question of security. Not in the sense of data privacy. No data is truly secure, not even when it's stored by the government. As this *Huffington Post* [article](#) reports, "more than a million Canadians may have had their private information compromised by data breaches within the federal government over the last ten years."

No, there'll be different security concerns if it becomes common to walk around with our keys, credit cards, and other personal data embedded in our hands. Special RFID-blocking wallets can prevent a crook from skimming data off your credit card or passport, but what protection is there if that same data is on a chip in your hand?

That's not to say there aren't huge benefits to embedded-chip technology. They've been used to keep track of pets and livestock for years. But pigs and Pomeranians don't carry their banking info or office keys around on their tracking chips.

But are we really ready to start embedding RFID chips in humans? Until someone can offer clear solutions to those concerns, and others, maybe those Swiss office workers would be wise to say hands off.

S.D. Livingston is the author and creator of the Madeline M. Mystery Series for kids, as well as several books for older readers. Visit her [website](#) for information on her writing.

The Travelling Student

Welcome to Quebec

Philip Kirkbride



My name is Philip Kirkbride. I'm a college graduate from Ontario studying at AU. I've always wanted to do an exchange program or study abroad but never found the right time to do so. This is part fifteen in the story of how Athabasca University has allowed me to create my own study abroad program. In part fourteen I left Longue-Rive and arrived in Quebec City. After several bad experiences with the service at a local hostel I hit the road in search of somewhere welcoming to sleep.

Having just left *La belle Planet Backpackers* hostel due to the extremely low quality of the room and service, I sat down and fired up my cell phone. It seemed all the hostels in town with good ratings were completely full. I found a promotional code for the website Hotwire after

searching some forums. Hotwire is a hotel booking website which lets you book hotels cheap, but the catch is that you don't know which hotel until you paid. After detecting my location a 4-star hotel popped up for \$100, and my promotional code brought it down to \$80. It was a bit more than I initially expected to pay but with all the other hostels booked it seemed like my best option.

I hit the purchase button and my hotel was revealed. I'd be staying at the *Hotel Le Concorde Quebec*. It was only a twenty minute walk away. If you're travelling in Quebec City be ready to walk up and down a lot of hills. The city is built on a very large hill with half the city on the top and the other half on the bottom. Of course, the crummy hostel I'd left was on the bottom, and *Le Concorde*, like most hotels, was on the top.

On the bright side, the walk was quite scenic. As you reach the top of the hill you're treated to a view towering over half the city. You also have a lot of old European style architecture which gives the city a bit of a nostalgic feel. Those features, in combination with the new experience of street signs in French, made the walk pass relatively quickly.

I walked into the lobby; it had a beautiful décor, lots of red carpets, and a large piano being played. The check-in was painless and in no time I was taking off my heavy steel toe boots and plopping myself into the incredibly comfortable bed. It was bliss.

My night consisted of a walk through the *Plaines d'Abraham* (a large scenic park directly beside the hotel), getting some Thai food, and bringing it home to eat while I watched some of the funniest stand-up I've ever seen broadcast out of Montreal.

Despite my initial experience at the hostel I was starting to like the vibe of Quebec City. I was aware I was in Canada still, but the city had a very distinct foreign flavour I wanted to explore. I knew Matt was still interested in going to Australia in November but that was still a few months away. I figured Quebec City could be an ideal place to focus on my studies thanks to its low cost of living, abundance of coffee shops, and unique French flavour. I soon found myself cruising Kijiji for short-term rentals in the area.



Before it's Too Late

When a grandson is five you know time is short. Very soon he'll be joining the ranks of the fulltime student and life will never be the same again. Our boy, Grady, is already busy with hockey practices and games, swimming lessons, two days of kindergarten per week, play dates, and parties. No doubt, summer will bring soccer and tee ball practices.

Arranging for a sleepover at the farm takes much maneuvering: texts, phone calls and emails, calendar checking, and picking up and returning plans. So when Roy knew he'd be attending a conference at Fantasyland Hotel in Edmonton, he suggested we try to arrange a sleepover at the hotel. It was genius considering that the hotel is part of West Edmonton Mall that is home to a huge indoor amusement park called Galaxyland.

So after Greg dropped Grady off we headed to the food court for a quick bite. Then because the fifty dollars (twenty-five from dad, twenty-five from us) was burning a hole in his Spiderman wallet we headed to the toy department at Target. You had to know he'd be leaving with a Lego set. He also bought a shield/slingshot/arrow type thing on sale. Before heading back to the room we checked every cage and tank at the pet store near the hotel. His favourite creature was a salamander because they have one living under their deck. The hamsters make my skin crawl but that's another story.

It is a grandparent's sworn duty to stretch bedtime to the breaking point so we did. He wasn't about to leave the Lego kit for morning. By ten he was out like a light.

In the morning we amused ourselves with a few games of Go Fish. He was thrilled to kick Nana's butt in each one. He squirmed and giggled as I made him promise he'd never tell a soul so I'm sure everyone knows by now. We made art using the dollar store version of Spirograph. Using a series of cogged circles and rings and different coloured pens we were able to create beautiful mandalas. We played a rousing game of Balloon. Batting it, chasing it, keeping it airborne burnt off his

energy and had both of us laughing.

Finally it was time. We had to set some ground rules first. He had to clearly understand that my constitution doesn't allow me to go on rides. I had to explain, more than once, that I couldn't do it with my kids and I can't with him. And besides, would he want me to vomit all over the attendant?

Hell, I got nauseated going through the haunted house with him. He went on all the rides that his height and lack of adult companion permitted. He rejected the 'baby' rides. He played Whack-a-Mole and redeemed his earned coupons for toy soldiers.

He had hours of fun and I got the chance to spend a couple of fun days with him—before it's too late, from where I sit.

Music Review

Foreign Lands

Samantha Stevens



Artist: First You Get The Sugar

Album: *Foreign Lands*

I first came across the band First You Get The Sugar while I was driving home after writing an exam last November. Typically, when I hear a band on the radio and try to make a mental note to look them up, I usually end up forgetting. But there was something about their song "Foreign Lands" that stuck in my head. I attentively listened to the radio announcer as he broadcast the name of the band, willing myself to remember to look them up when I got home. Then the announcer on the radio said that not only were they an indie band from Montreal, but, at that time, they were offering their latest album for free on their website. As soon as I got home I ran to my computer, downloaded *Foreign Lands*, and listened to it several times over. I knew instantly that I wanted to write a review of this album and share this wonderful band

with as many people as I could.

First You Get The Sugar was formed in 2008 by Adam Kagan, Mick Mendelsohn, Daniel Moscovitch, and Alex Silver. Although the band is classified as rock, when I asked Daniel about the band's musical influences, he said "From Rock to Jazz, Hip Hop, Electronica, big-time, indie, you name it. There is even some actual Mozart tucked away on our first record." When asked about the genre of music they play, Daniel went on to say that when it comes to being classified a specific genre, they are "more concerned with the original, deep, important work in each genre than the genres themselves. In the end, we are a rock band, but we draw from all that is out there." Each song on their latest album is different and it is difficult to pinpoint the exact genre, but if you are a fan of visionary lyrics, heart-melting vocals, atmospheric drums, pulsating bass, and clever guitar riffs, then be sure to check out *Foreign Lands*, which can be streamed on the band's [website](#) or purchased on iTunes.

The title track "Foreign Lands" is easily my favourite song on this album, but the song "Point Reyes" is definitely a close second. Both songs have profound lyrics that are not only pleasant to listen to, but touch on deep emotions that are not often explored in music. Adding to the obvious ingeniousness of this band is the drums and bass in both songs. I find that it is the drums that set the mood and enhance the expressive bass. In "Foreign Lands" the drums add an almost threatening air to the song, with the bass hauntingly predominant throughout. At the opposite end of the spectrum are the intimate drums that create a homelike atmosphere in "Point Reyes", which is carried by the soft roll of the bass.

Overall, the entire album is magnificent, and I could easily fill several pages describing what I like about each song. So if you are looking for an inspiring Canadian band to listen to, one that defies genres and creates music that touches the soul, be sure to check out First You Get The Sugar.

Samantha Stevens is an aspiring writer who loves combining her love for literature with photography, painting, music, and all creative pursuits.



Dear
Barb

Barbara Godin

Think of the Children

Dear Barb:

My sister has two small children, ages five and seven, and I feel she is a neglectful parent. She rarely has regular meals for her children and they often go to school without even having breakfast, although she does make them a sandwich for lunch. When I try to talk to her about this she says there is food in the house, they can make their own breakfast. They are five and seven years old! She is neglectful in other ways too. For example, she often leaves her children home alone while she goes out shopping or running errands. The children's father is not in the picture and our parents live in another city. I don't want to worry them, so I have never told them about this. My sister says I am overbearing and that it's none of my business how she raises her kids. Is there anything I can do to protect my niece and nephew? Melanie

Hi Melanie:

Thanks for writing Melanie; you seem to be a very caring aunt. Not sure where your sister is located, but most provinces have laws regarding the age that children can be left alone and for how long. Without a doubt, it is not at only five or seven years old, more likely twelve and up. I am wondering if your sister has some other issues going on in her life that are contributing to her neglectful behaviour. Children need a healthy breakfast in order to function properly in school, which is why many schools have programs for children who are not provided an adequate breakfast at home. Left to their own resources, I'm sure children this age would not make healthy food choices, but rather choose a few cookies or other sweets. Since your sister seems resistant to your advice, I

would suggest you contact the Children's Aid Society in your area. They will have a worker visit your sister and assist her in making better choices for the care of her children. You really have no alternative but to report this situation to the authorities.

Dear Barb:

My wife and I have been married two years. We both work in the financial industry performing similar jobs; however she makes more money than me. I know that shouldn't be a problem, but it is for me. I have never mentioned this to her, but I do feel that as a man, I should be making more money than her. I love my wife tremendously and I am proud of her accomplishments. Everything I read says that women still make less money than men, but that is not the case with us. I don't know why this bothers me so much, any advice? Thanks Blake.

Hey Blake:

The fact that your wife makes more money than you should not be an issue and if it is, most likely it is related to your personal perception of the way things should be. Possibly this was the dynamic in your household as you were growing up. Not sure how old you are but women's roles have evolved in the last twenty or so years. Today's women are struggling to gain equality in a male dominated world and they are in need of support and acceptance, especially from those closest to them. It's time to let his archaic thinking go. Thanks for writing Blake.

Email your questions to voice@voicemagazine.org. Some submissions may be edited for length or to protect confidentiality; your real name and location will never be printed. This column is for entertainment only. The author is not a professional counsellor and this column is not intended to take the place of professional advice.

Comic

Wanda Waterman

Weird Canada

Weird Parties Department

In 2011 Ed the Sock, a sock puppet created by Steven Kerzner, announced his intention to run for Prime Minister as head of the new "Fed-Up Party" (FU). The party's aim was to fight apathy and stupidity in government. After withdrawing from the electoral race, Ed stated that he would continue to forward the goals of the party by providing "smartass commentary for a dumbass political establishment," which at the time was the administration of conservative Stephen Harper.



WRITTEN BY WANDA WATERMAN



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