

Career Essentials: Application Forms and Cover Letters



The session will begin at 1pm



Please make sure you have downloaded the example cover letters e-mailed to you today.



Or download from here:

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/careers/resources/slides/career-essentials>

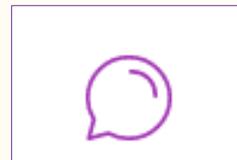
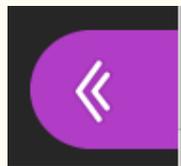
Career Essentials: Application Forms and Cover Letters

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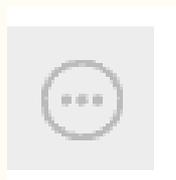
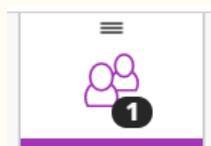
Welcome!

If you joined using a name that is not the student name you are registered with please introduce yourself in the chat box (for the register).



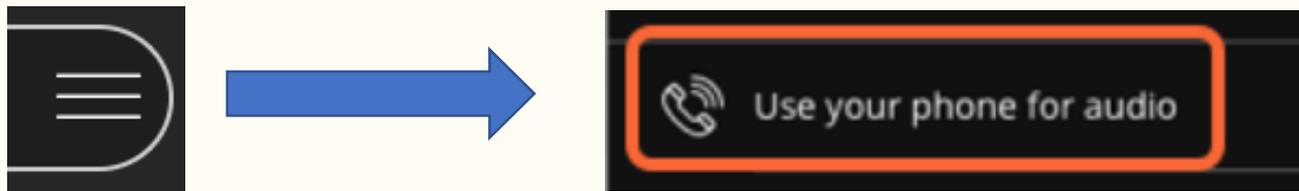
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1. Check your sound settings on your device
2. Try leaving the session and re-joining
3. Use the menu tool (top left) and select “use your phone for audio”



Career Essentials Summer 2020

- Mix of online talks and workshops
- **Small Group Work sessions (CV)**
- 6 module e-learning course

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/careers/resources/elearning>

Talks May 2020

Interview success: in person and online	21 st
Improve your CV	22 nd
Connecting with Employers Remotely	26 th
Sourcing Jobs & Work Experience	27 th
Considering a Masters	28 th
CVs – small groupwork	29 th

Talks June 2020

Your Future and Working Towards It 2nd

How to Build Your Skills & Experience
Without an Internship 4th

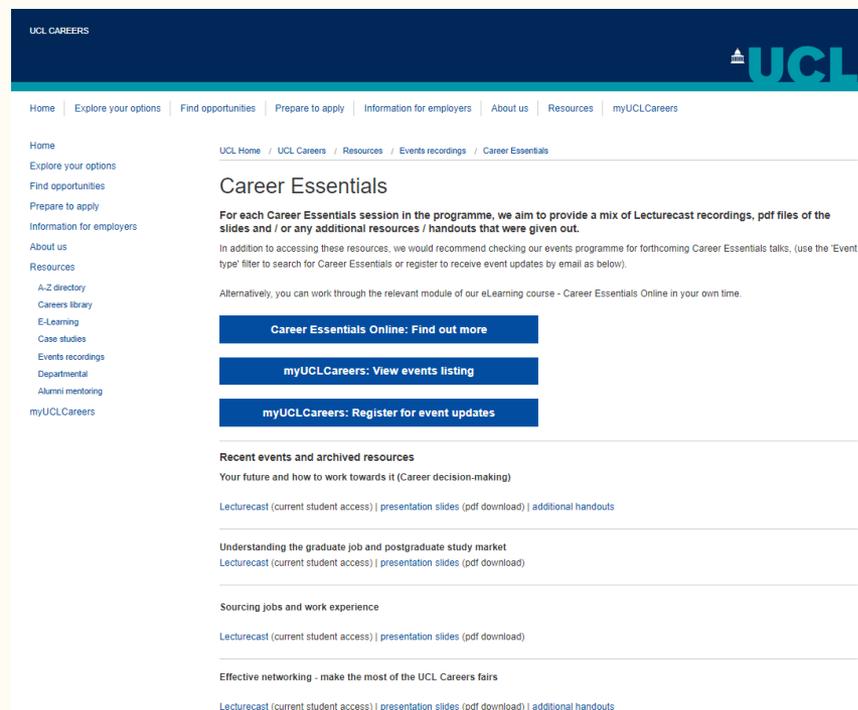
CVs – small groupwork 5th

Linkedin tbc

Slides and recordings

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Search 'UCL Career Essentials'



The screenshot shows the UCL Careers website page for Career Essentials. The page has a dark blue header with the UCL logo and navigation links. A left sidebar contains a list of menu items. The main content area features a title 'Career Essentials', a paragraph of introductory text, three blue buttons for further actions, and a section for 'Recent events and archived resources' with several links.

UCL CAREERS

Home | Explore your options | Find opportunities | Prepare to apply | Information for employers | About us | Resources | myUCLCareers

UCL Home / UCL Careers / Resources / Events recordings / Career Essentials

Career Essentials

For each Career Essentials session in the programme, we aim to provide a mix of Lecturecast recordings, pdf files of the slides and / or any additional resources / handouts that were given out.

In addition to accessing these resources, we would recommend checking our events programme for forthcoming Career Essentials talks, (use the 'Event type' filter to search for Career Essentials or register to receive event updates by email as below).

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Career Essentials Online: Find out more

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Recent events and archived resources

Your future and how to work towards it (Career decision-making)

[Lecturecast \(current student access\)](#) | [presentation slides \(pdf download\)](#) | [additional handouts](#)

Understanding the graduate job and postgraduate study market

[Lecturecast \(current student access\)](#) | [presentation slides \(pdf download\)](#)

Sourcing jobs and work experience

[Lecturecast \(current student access\)](#) | [presentation slides \(pdf download\)](#)

Effective networking - make the most of the UCL Careers fairs

[Lecturecast \(current student access\)](#) | [presentation slides \(pdf download\)](#) | [additional handouts](#)

Home

- Explore your options
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 - A-Z directory
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 - Alumni mentoring
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What we'll cover in this session

1. Why employers use application forms
2. How to improve your **application forms**
3. Top tips for **cover letters**



Experience so far

Poll 1

- Which are you likely to be completing in the near future

Experience so far

Poll 2

- Have you ever completed an application form?

If you answered yes...

- How did you find it?

Type in the chat box

Why do employers use **application forms?**

- Type your thoughts in the chat box

Why do employers use **application forms**?

- Creates focus on areas relevant to the role
- Consistent and transparent selection - marking guidelines and scoring
- Reduces number of applicants (effective filter, deters those who don't have motivation)
- Allows use of 'killer questions'

What types of questions come up on **application forms**?

- Type your thoughts in the chat box

Types of questions (1)

Biographical

- Detail previous work experience. For each question, describe your role and responsibilities, telling us specifically about any areas of leadership.

Career choice and motivation

- Why do you want to work for this organisation?
- Describe the specific reasons for applying to this role.

Types of questions (2)

Competency

- Please give a recent example of a team in which you have been involved. What was your role? What challenges did you face?

Industry Specific

- Describe a recent development that has impacted on this sector. What implications might this development have for our future strategy?

Types of questions (3)

Personal statements

- In the space below, tell us about your motivation for applying to this positions and how your academic background and skills are relevant. Refer to the person specification throughout.

Selection activities competency grid

Candidate requirements	Application	Interview	Groupwork	Presentation
Teamwork	2		2	
Organisation		2		
Persuasion				3
Work under pressure	3	1		2
Oral communication	2		3	3
Motivation and drive		3	2	

Scoring competency or motivation questions

Describe how you have achieved a goal through influencing the actions or opinions of others in a team.

- evidence of steps taken to understanding other people's concerns.
- ability to negotiate and compromise where necessary.
- researching position and presenting with credibility.
- successful outcome / reflection.

How to improve your application forms



Example opportunity

BrandsDirect are a well established but expanding advertising agency looking for trainee account managers to work with our exciting portfolio of clients.

Whilst no previous experience is required, we're looking for graduates who have a passion for this business. You must be able to build relationships, manage multiple projects and make the right decisions in what is a stimulating but pressured environment.

What competencies are they looking for? Type in the chat box

What key competencies are they looking for?

Whilst no previous experience is required, we're looking for graduates who have a passion for this business. You must be able to **build relationships**, **manage multiple projects** and make the right **decisions** in what is a stimulating but **pressured environment**.

- Building relationships (interpersonal skills)
- Manage multiple projects (organisation, time management)
- Decision making
- Working under pressure

Example questions & answers

1. Why do you want to work as an account manager for our advertising agency? (200 words)

What kind of question is this?

2. Describe how you have achieved a goal through influencing the actions or opinions of others in a team. (150 words)

What kind of question is this?

Critiquing motivation answer (1A)

1. Why do you want to work as an account manager for our advertising agency? (200 words)

Take a look at Candidate A's answer to question 1 on the next slide.

Imagine you are the recruiter. What are you looking for?
Do you find it in the answer?

Type your thoughts into the chat box.

Q1: Candidate A's answer (motivation)

Your organisation is an award-winning leader in its field, employing 3,000 people globally. It has an international reputation and is also one of the most respected agencies in the UK. It is important for me to work for a successful organisation and I would welcome all the different opportunities available to me. I would also like to work abroad at some point and so the global nature of your organisation appeals to me.

Finally, I'd like to work for the organisation because the role matches my skills, particularly my communication and teamwork skills. I am a creative person and I am also interested in developing new skills, and believe that your graduate account management scheme would help me to achieve my goals. **(122 words)**

Analysis of motivation answer (1)

1. Why do you want to work as an account manager for our advertising agency? (200 words)

Your organisation is an award-winning leader in its field, employing 3,000 people globally. It has an international reputation and is also one of the most respected agencies in the UK.

- Generic, easily accessible information.

Analysis of motivation answer (2)

1. Why do you want to work as an account manager for our advertising agency? (200 words)

It's important for me to work for a successful organisation and I would welcome all the different opportunities available to me. I would also like to work abroad at some point and so the global nature of your organisation appeals to me.

- Bland, candidate-centric interest

Analysis of motivation answer (3)

1. Why do you want to work as an account manager for our advertising agency? (200 words)

Finally, I'd like to work for the organisation because the role matches my skills, particularly my communication and teamwork skills. I am a creative person and I am also interested in developing new skills, and believe that your graduate account management scheme would help me to achieve my goals. (122 words)

- Distinct lack of evidence to back-up claims

Critiquing motivation answer (1B)

1. Why do you want to work as an account manager for our advertising agency? (200 words)

Take a look at Candidate B's answer to question 1 on the next slide.

Imagine you are the recruiter. What are you looking for?
Do you find it in the answer?

Type your thoughts into the chat box.

Q1: Candidate B's answer (motivation)

I have researched BrandDirect's client-base and am extremely excited by the thought of working for prestigious brands such as Continental and L'Oreal. Having spent an internship period with L'Oreal in the summer, I have been following the recent Garnier European campaign with a great deal of interest.

My skills are a good match for the position of account manager. I have recently been involved with the innovative re-branding strategy of the student union through a diverse range of media channels, which will help me to assume responsibility for high-profile campaigns from an early stage. After examining your website and attending your UCL Skills presentation in September, I understand the value of good organisational skills to successfully manage client campaigns. My organisation skills greatly improved during my time at L'Oreal, where I reported to three demanding brand managers and worked to extremely tight production schedules.

Finally I have also been impressed by the honesty and enthusiasm of recently recruited BrandsDirect trainees I met at this year's UCL Careers Fair, especially Maurice Edwards who spoke very highly of the creative culture at BrandsDirect. This re-enforced the 'creative hot-house' reputation of the agency as described in *Campaign Magazine's* agency profile of 27 April. **(200 words)**

Motivation questions: Why the company? Why you?

- Think about:
- What does the company do? E.g. products, services, clients.
- What are their strengths? How do they differ from competitors?
- What have they done recently? E.g. projects, news items.
- What are their values and organisational culture?
- And how does all this relate to you?

Critiquing competency answer

2. Describe how you have achieved a goal through influencing the actions or opinions of others in a team. (150 words)

Take a look at an example answer on the next slide.

Imagine you are the recruiter. What are you looking for? Do you find it in the answer?

Type your thoughts into the chat box.

Q2: Answer version 1 (competency)

At my internship at LHS Marketing, I was asked if I could assist in the development of the new website. I was asked for my opinion as a “fresh pair of eyes” and then joined the team of 8 who were developing the site. After doing a considerable amount of research of competitive sites, I had some ideas including incorporating a pop-up menu of up-and-coming events. Some of the team were sceptical of this idea due to the user backlash against pop-up advertising.

The general feeling was that pop-ups were no longer effective and could actually alienate visitors. This was discussed in several meetings, and I was convinced that this would be an effective strategy. I showed them some design ideas and eventually they agreed to give it a try in the events sections. I then designed the pop-up to promote various events and some of them have been used. **(150 words)**

Analysis of competency answer (1)

2. Describe how you have achieved a goal through influencing the actions or opinions of others in a team.

At my internship at LHS Marketing, I was asked if I could assist in the development of the new website. I was asked for my opinion as a “fresh pair of eyes” and then joined the team of 8 who were developing the site.

- Reactive and uninspiring opening.

Analysis of competency answer (2)

After doing a considerable amount of research of competitive sites, I had some ideas including incorporating a pop-up menu of up-and-coming events. Some of the team were sceptical of this idea due to the user backlash against pop-up advertising.

The general feeling was that pop-ups were no longer effective and could actually alienate visitors. This was discussed in several meetings, and I was convinced that this would be an effective strategy.

- Lack of insight into process of persuasion.

Analysis of competency answer (3)

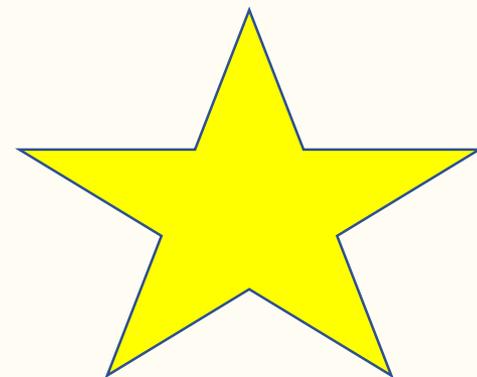
2. Describe how you have achieved a goal through influencing the actions or opinions of others in a team.

I showed them some design ideas and eventually they agreed to give it a try in the events sections. I then designed the pop-up to promote various events and some of them have been used. **(150 words)**

- Non-specific and underwhelming outcome

STAR: Competency answer structure

- **Situation:** what's the setting / background to the story
- **Task:** what was the task / objective?
- **Action:** What did you do?
- **Result:** What was the outcome?



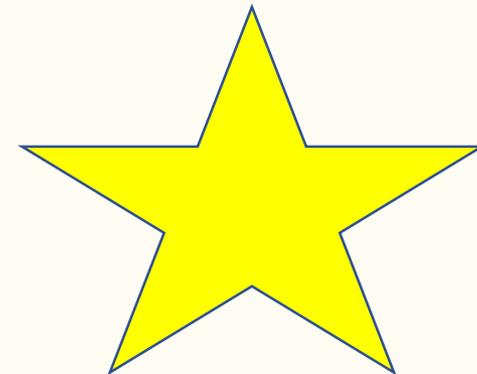
The two most important sections:

Action: What did you do?

- What did you have to think about?
- What was your approach / steps involved
- How did you overcome any problems?
- Use 'active' verbs such as 'planned', 'negotiated' 'listened'

Result: what was the outcome?

- Quantify if possible
- What learning did you acquire?



Critiquing competency answer revised

2. Describe how you have achieved a goal through influencing the actions or opinions of others in a team. (150 words)

Take a look at a **revised** answer on the next slide.

Imagine you are the recruiter. What are you looking for? Do you find it in the answer?

Type your thoughts into the chat box.

Q2: Answer version 2 (competency)

At LHS Marketing, I assisted in the development of the new website. I took it upon myself to conduct an audit of similar sites and presented my findings to the development team, recommending the use of 'pop-ups' to advertise forthcoming events.

Mindful of industry scepticism regarding their use, I used the initial project briefing as an opportunity to find out exactly what others' objections might be. Based on this, I decided to answer those objections in detail, researched available data on the area, prepared visual design ideas and presented my case. Despite the team's initial concerns, I persuaded them to allocate funds for an initial trial period, after which we would review the success of the pilot programme. This compromise seemed to work.

The resulting click-through rates were encouraging and the pop-ups are now a permanent addition to the website promoting attendance at our events by 10%. (147 words)

Q2: Version 2 highlighted (competency)

At LHS Marketing, I assisted in the development of the new website. I took it upon myself to conduct an audit of similar sites and **presented** my findings to the development team, **recommending** the use of 'pop-ups' to advertise forthcoming events.

Mindful of industry scepticism regarding their use, I used the initial project briefing as an opportunity to find out exactly what others' objections might be. Based on this, I **decided** to answer those objections in detail, **researched** available data on the area, **prepared** visual design ideas and **presented** my case. Despite the team's initial concerns, I **persuaded** them to allocate funds for an initial trial period, after which we would review the success of the pilot programme. This compromise seemed to work.

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Competency questions: how might you prepare an answer?

The person specification asks for:

- report writing
- experience of IT
- time management
- relationship building
- adaptability
- communication



Preparing an answer: demonstrating skills & experience

- report writing
- experience of IT
- time management
- relationship building
- adaptability
- communication
- your degree
- website redesign
- research projects
- UCL student bar work
- travelling / year abroad
- charring society meetings

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Applying online - tips

- Download the form (if possible) and assess requirements
- Plan your approach and do your research
- Complete the more straightforward areas
- Break down the harder questions
- Brainstorm possible examples, decide on most appropriate
- Draft, evaluate, edit. Keep to word count
- UCL Careers application appointment

Example Cover Letters: Compare and Contrast

Bain requirements

- Motivation for consulting
- Analytical and problem-solving ability
- Strong leadership skills
- Drive to deliver results

Cover letters

- Which do you prefer?
- Do the applicants meet the requirements?
- Who would you hire?

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/careers/resources/slides/career-essentials>

Top tips for improving cover letters



Tip 1



- Good writing is concise writing - 1 page maximum

Tip 2

Indicate...

- Why you're interested in the role
- Why you're interested in the organization
- Why they should hire you (what do you have to offer?)
- **Make the links!**



Tip 3



Does your cover letter pass the 'blind test'?

- Could this same letter be written for any other organisation?
- Invest time researching the organisation
- Refer to your sources, give specifics

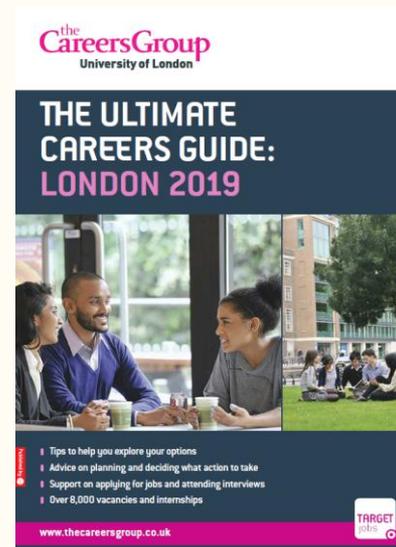
CareersLab YouTube video suite:



[UCL CareersLab YouTube video](#)

Additional Resources

- Helpsheets
- Ultimate Careers Guide
- [Electronic](#) & paper copies



Cover letters and personal statements

A cover letter is your opportunity to make a positive first impression. Just as important as your CV, it's where you can explain your skills, ability and motivation for the role.

The aim of a cover letter is to convince the recruiter of your suitability for the job and to put you through to the next stage of the selection process. To do this effectively your cover letter should provide evidence that you meet the requirements in the person specification.

It is also where you can explain your motivations and understanding of the role and organisation that you are applying to. These principles also apply to personal statements, which can form part of an application form where you are asked to provide details about your interest in the role.

In essence, your aim is to communicate:

- **add** you want to work in their organisation
- **add** you want to work in that particular role
- **add** your strengths, skills and experience make you the right candidate for the role

To answer these points effectively you will need to be specific and tailor your letter to each role you apply for. Ideally your cover letter and your CV will be read together but this might not be the case, so make sure they can each stand alone. Your cover letter should refer to key facts from the CV, highlighting areas of particular relevance to the role, but shouldn't merely duplicate it. You should always send a cover letter with your CV unless you are told otherwise.

Our title How to write a CV has further information.

Structure and content

Remember your cover letter is an example of your written communication, so write in a clear, succinct and professional manner. To make it easy for the recruiter to read, follow a structure and keep to one side of A4. The following gives an outline of a suggested structure, although the sections could be used in a different order and some may require two paragraphs.

Greeting

Address your cover letter to a named contact whenever possible to show you have sent it to them personally. These details will usually be in the application pack, otherwise look at the organisation's website or use LinkedIn to find a name.

Introduction

Include who you are, your degree subject, university and situation – recently graduated, about to graduate, penultimate year. Explain why you are writing (to apply for a position/looking for work experience) and where you saw the position advertised or, if it's a speculative application, where you heard about the organisation.

Why them?

Employers look for candidates who are genuinely interested in working for their organisation, who are enthused by the role and are keen to carry out the work involved. Generally speaking, staff who are passionate about their work are most likely to have a positive attitude at work and perform well.

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/careers/applying/applications>

UCL Careers 1 to 1 Support

- Applications advice (20 minutes)
- Short guidance (20 minutes)
- Practice Interview (60 minutes, on condition of real employer interview)
- Book online in advance using myUCLCareers



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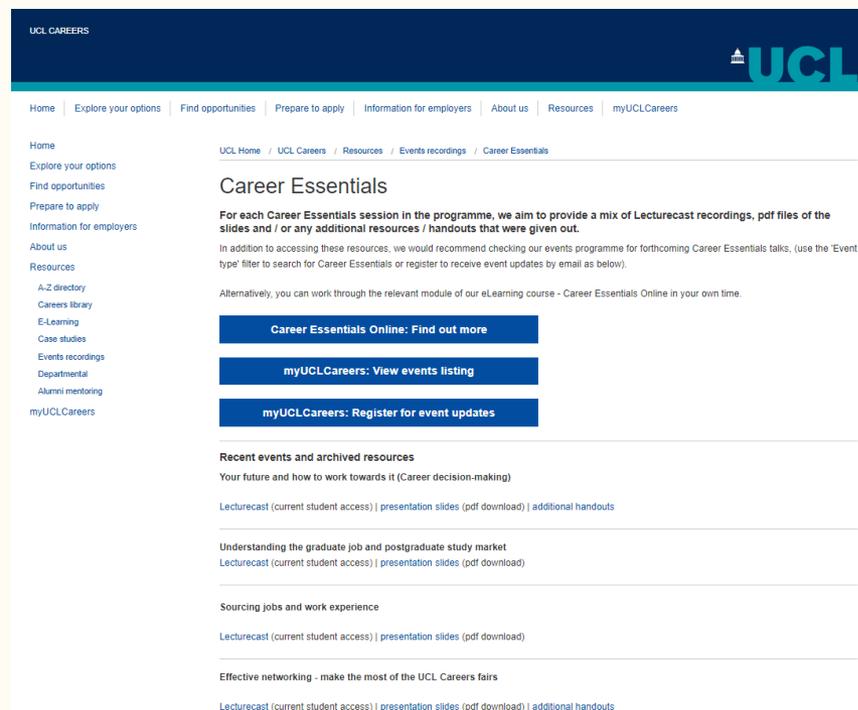
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Slides and recordings

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Any Questions?



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