



Standard Practice for Minimum Set of Data Elements to Identify a Soil Sampling Site¹

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^{ε1} NOTE—Paragraph 1.7 was added editorially October 1998.

1. Scope

1.1 This practice covers what information should be obtained to uniquely identify any soil sampling or examination site where an absolute and recoverable location is necessary for quality control of the study, such as a waste disposal project. The minimum set of data elements was developed considering the needs for informational data bases, such as geographic information systems (GIS). Other distinguishing details, such as individual site characteristics help in singularly cataloging the site. For studies that are not environmentally regulated, such as for an agricultural or preconstruction survey, the data specifications established by a client and the project manager may be different from that of the minimum set.

1.2 As used in this practice, a soil sampling site is meant to be a single point, not a geographic area or property, located by an X, Y, and Z coordinate position at land surface or a fixed datum. All soil data collected for the site are directly related to the coordinate position, for example, sample from x feet (or metres) or sample from interval x^1 to x^2 ft (or metres) below the X, Y, and Z coordinate position. A soil sampling site can include a test well, augered or bored hole, excavation, grab sample, test pit, sidewall sample, stream bed, or any other site where samples of the soil can be collected or examined for the purpose intended.

1.3 The collection of soil samples is a disruptive procedure as the material is usually extracted from its natural environment and then transported from the site to a laboratory for analysis. Normally, in this highly variable type of material, the adjacent soil profile will not be precisely the same as the sampled soil. For these reasons, when soil samples are removed the same material cannot be collected from the site later. Therefore, it is essential that the minimum set of data elements be documented with a high degree of accuracy.

1.4 Samples of soil (sediment) filtered from the water of streams, rivers, or lakes are not in the scope of this practice.

NOTE 1—There are many additional data elements that may be necessary to identify and to describe a soil sampling site, but are not included

in the minimum set of data elements. An agency or company may require additional data elements as a part of their minimum set for a specific project or program.

1.5 This practice includes those data elements that will distinguish a site's geographical location on the Earth, political regimes, source identifiers, and individual site characteristics. These elements apply to all soil and geotechnical sampling sites involved in environmental assessment studies. Each category of site, such as a bore hole or excavation, may require additional data elements to be complete.

1.6 Some suggested components and representative codes for coded data elements, for example, "setting", are those established by Ref (1),² by ASCE in Ref (2), by the Water Resources Division of the U.S. Geological Survey in Ref (3), and by Boulding in Ref (4) and (5).

NOTE 2—The data elements presented in this practice do not uniquely imply a computer data base, but the minimum set of soil data elements that should be collected for entry into any type of permanent file.

1.7 *This practice offers a set of instructions for performing one or more specific operations. This document cannot replace education or experience and should be used in conjunction with professional judgment. Not all aspects of this practice may be applicable in all circumstances. This ASTM standard is not intended to represent or replace the standard of care by which the adequacy of a given professional service must be judged, nor should this document be applied without consideration of a project's many unique aspects. The word "Standard" in the title of this document means only that the document has been approved through the ASTM consensus process.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 ASTM Standards:

- D 420 Guide for Investigating and Sampling Soil and Rock³
- D 653 Terminology Relating to Soil, Rock, and Contained Fluids³
- D 2487 Classification of Soils for Engineering Purposes (Unified Soil Classification System)³
- D 2488 Practice for Description and Identification of Soils

¹ This practice is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D-18 on Soil and Rock and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D18.21 on Ground Water and Vadose Zone Investigations.

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² The boldface numbers given in parentheses refer to a list of references at the end of the text.

³ *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 04.08.

(Visual-Manual Procedure)³

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3. Terminology

3.1 Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:

3.1.1 Soils are sediments or other unconsolidated solid particles of rock produced by the physical and chemical disintegration of rock, and which may or may not contain organic matter (see Terminology D 653).

3.1.2 *Discussion*—Soil consists of any individual or combination of gravel (passes a 3-in. or 75-mm screen), sand, clay, silt, organic clay, organic silt, and peat as categorized in the Unified Soil Classification System (1, 2, 4, 5) (see Classification D 2487). Materials larger than gravel, including cobbles (between 3 and 12 in. or 75 and 300 mm) and boulders (more than 12 in. or 300 mm), are not included in the definition of soil. Soil is found above the consolidated rocks and can be unsaturated (vadose zone) or saturated (capillary fringe and water table) with water or other liquids.

NOTE 3—Soil, as defined by soils engineers, is all unconsolidated material above bedrock (6); or the natural medium for growth of land plants (7). The pedologic definition is, the unconsolidated mineral or organic matter on the surface of the earth subjected to and influenced by genic and environmental factors of: parent material, climate (including water and effects), macro- and micro-organisms, and topography, all acting over a period of time and producing a product-soil that differs from material from which it is derived in many physical, chemical, biological, and morphological properties and characteristics (8).

3.2 Sediment (for geology) is a mass of organic or inorganic solid fragmented material, or the solid fragment itself, which comes from weathering of rock and is carried by, suspended in, or dropped by air, water, or ice; or a mass accumulated by any other natural agent and that forms in layers on the Earth's surface such as sand, gravel, silt, mud, till, or loess (6,9). These materials are "soils" for the purpose of this practice.

4. Summary of Practice

4.1 This practice includes the following data elements to identify a subsurface soil site:

4.1.1 Geographic Location:

4.1.1.1 Latitude,

4.1.1.2 Longitude,

4.1.1.3 Coordinate precision,

4.1.1.4 Altitude, and

4.1.1.5 Altitude precision.

4.1.2 Political Regimes:

4.1.2.1 State or country identification, and

4.1.2.2 County or county equivalent.

4.1.3 Source Identifiers:

4.1.3.1 Project identification,

4.1.3.2 Owner's name,

4.1.3.3 Source agency or company and address,

4.1.3.4 Unique identification, and

4.1.3.5 Date of first record for the soil sampling site.

4.1.4 Individual Site Characteristics:

4.1.4.1 Setting,

4.1.4.2 Type of soil sampling site,

4.1.4.3 Use of site, and

4.1.4.4 Reason for data collection or examination.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 Normally, the basic soil data are gathered by trained personnel during the field investigation phase of a study. Each agency or company has its own methods of obtaining, recording, and storing the information. Usually, these data are recorded onto forms that serve both in organizing the information in the field and the office, and often as entry forms for a computer data base. For soil data to be of maximum value to the current project and any future studies, especially those involved in the assessment of the environment, it is essential that a minimum set of key data elements be recorded for each site.

5.2 When obtaining basic data concerning a subsurface soil site, it is necessary to thoroughly identify that site so that it may be readily located again with minimal uncertainty and may be accurately plotted and interpreted for data parameters in relationship to other sites. For example, information can be presented on maps and in summary tables.

6. Documentation

6.1 Geographic Location:

6.1.1 *Introduction*—The universally accepted coordinates defining the absolute two-dimensional location of a site on the Earth's surface are latitude and longitude. The coordinates are determined by careful measurement from an accurate map, by survey, for example, Geographical Positioning System (GPS) or by conversion from another coordinate system, for example, Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM) System or State Plane Coordinate System (SPCS). The third-dimension of the location is established by determining the altitude at the site, usually from topographic maps or by surveying techniques. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has guidance documents concerning their policy for locating data points or sites (10–13). In addition, the publication (14) can be obtained by the address given in Footnote 5⁵.

NOTE 4—If sites are located by property, local, State, or Federal boundaries or by soil sampling grid lines, other grid coordinates, plane coordinates, plant location grids, referenced to recoverable benchmarks, their locations should be readily convertible to absolute latitude/longitude coordinates by an acceptable method.

6.1.2 *Latitude*—Latitude is a coordinate representation that indicates locations on the surface of the Earth using the Earth's equator as the respective latitudinal origin. Record the best available value for the latitude of the site in degrees, minutes, seconds and fractions of a second (DDMMSSss). If latitude of the site is south of the Equator, precede the numbers with a minus sign (–). The use of N or S is also appropriate (3,13–15).

6.1.3 *Longitude*—Longitude is a coordinate representation that indicates locations on the surface of the Earth using the prime meridian (Greenwich, England) as the longitudinal

⁴ Annual Book of ASTM Standards, Vol 04.09.

⁵ Available from National Technical Information Service, U.S. Department of Commerce, 5285 Port Royal Road, Springfield, VA 22161.

origin. Record the best available value for the longitude of the site, in degrees, minutes, seconds, and fractions of a second (DDMMSSs). If longitude of the site is measured east of the Greenwich Meridian, precede the numbers with a minus sign (–). The use of E or W is also appropriate (3,13–15).

6.1.4 *Coordinate Precision*—Record the precision or accuracy of the coordinate values. The precision values may be measured in linear distance (feet or metres) or in coordinate degree values (stated as decimal values or as minutes and seconds). The method specified by EPA is the coordinate degree values (13).

NOTE 5—For most soil surveys the precision of the coordinate values is dependent upon the size of the sample. In most subsurface drilling operations, the highest level of attainable accuracy is about ± 0.05 ft (1.5 cm), therefore surveys of greater precision should not be required.

6.1.5 *Altitude*—Record the altitude of land surface or measuring point. Altitude of the land surface is the vertical distance in feet (or metres) either above or below a reference datum surface. The reference datum surface must be noted (3,13,15).

NOTE 6—In the United States, this reference surface should be the North American Vertical Datum (NAVD) of 1988 or National Geodetic Vertical Datum (NGVD) of 1929. If another vertical reference datum is used to determine the altitude, describe the system.

NOTE 7—The measuring point is usually a carefully surveyed and permanently fixed object near a soil sampling site used for determining the altitude of the collected or examined material at the site.

6.1.6 *Altitude Precision*—Record the precision or accuracy of the altitude. As an example, Record 1, for an accuracy of ± 1 ft (or m) or 0.1 for ± 0.1 th ft (or m) to denote the judged error of the measurement (3).

6.2 *Political Regimes:*

6.2.1 *Introduction*—The description of the soil sampling site in some political jurisdictions helps in the proper identification of the site.

6.2.2 *State or Country Identification*—Record the state or country in which the site is physically located. The common systems for identifying States and countries are the Federal Information Processing Standard code (FIPS), a two-digit numeric code or the American National Standard Abbreviation two-letter code. The country codes are a two-character and a set of three-character alphabetic codes (3,13–16–18).

NOTE 8—The publications (FIPS PUB 5-2, FIPS PUB 6-4 and FIPS PUB 104-1) containing the codes for countries, states, and counties are available from the address in Footnote 5.

6.2.3 *County and County Equivalent*—Record the county or county equivalent in which the site is physically located. The common code system for identifying counties is the FIPS code, a three-digit numeric code. The documentation of political subdivisions will depend on the system used in each individual country (3,13,15,18).

NOTE 9—In many cases it is necessary to record a subdivision of the local government to further identify the area where the soil sampling site is located. Some local subdivisions are a city, town, village, municipality, township, or borough. Identify the local subdivision, for example “City of Rockville”, to clearly denote the unit.

6.3 *Source Identifiers:*

6.3.1 *Introduction*—The soil sampling site must be identified as to the project, owner, the agency or company that

recorded data, and its distinctive identification.

6.3.2 *Project Identification*—Record the name of the project that includes the soil sampling site, for example, Coralville Dam, Johnson County Soil Survey, or Cedar Low-level Waste Disposal (3–5).

6.3.3 *Owner’s Name*—Record the name of the property owner of the soil sampling site. The recommended format for an individual’s name is: last name, first name, middle initial. If a company’s name is lengthy, use meaningful abbreviations. The owner’s address can be included for further identification (3,15).

6.3.4 *Source Agency or Company and Address*—Record the name and address of the agency or company that collected the data for the soil sampling site. This data element is necessary to determine the original source of the data for the site (19).

6.3.5 *Unique Identification*—Record the unique naming that the agency or company uses to identify the soil sampling site. This identification is called by several terms such as “local site number”, “site identification”, and “well number” (if the site was finished as a well), etc. The description is commonly a combination of letters and numbers that could represent a land-net location or a sequential assignment for a site in a county, city, company, or project. This identification is important to precisely differentiate a site in the records of an agency or company (2–5,15).

6.3.6 *Date of First Record for the Soil Sampling Site*—Record the date that the first valid transaction occurred for any element of the specified site. This could be the date of a permit application or start of construction. This element is important to facilitate the proper identification of the record (2–5,15).

6.4 *Individual Characteristics of the Site:*

6.4.1 *Introduction*—Each soil sampling site has specific features that, in combination, uniquely identify that site. These characteristics should be recorded for further defining the site.

6.4.2 *Setting*—Record the information that best describes the setting in which the site is located. Setting refers to the topographic, landform, or geomorphic features near the site. Suggested setting components and representative codes are (2–5,15):

- 6.4.2.1 A—Alluvial fan,
- 6.4.2.2 B—Playa,
- 6.4.2.3 C—Stream channel,
- 6.4.2.4 D—Local depression,
- 6.4.2.5 E—Dunes,
- 6.4.2.6 F—Flat surface,
- 6.4.2.7 G—Flood plain,
- 6.4.2.8 H—Hilltop,
- 6.4.2.9 I—Inland wetlands,
- 6.4.2.10 J—River delta,
- 6.4.2.11 K—Sinkhole,
- 6.4.2.12 L—Lake,
- 6.4.2.13 M—Mangrove swamp or coastal wetlands,
- 6.4.2.14 N—Estuary,
- 6.4.2.15 P—Pediment,
- 6.4.2.16 S—Hillside (slope),
- 6.4.2.17 T—Alluvial or marine terrace,
- 6.4.2.18 U—Undulating,
- 6.4.2.19 V—Valley flat (valleys of all sizes),

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- 6.4.2.20 W—Upland draw,
- 6.4.2.21 X—Unknown,
- 6.4.2.22 Y—Wetlands, and
- 6.4.2.23 Z—Other—describe.

- 6.4.3.2 B—Bored hole, mechanical, specify type,
- 6.4.3.3 C—Cone penetration,
- 6.4.3.4 D—Trench,
- 6.4.3.5 E—Excavated hole, for example, construction location,
- 6.4.3.6 F—Test pit,
- 6.4.3.7 G—Geophysical test hole,
- 6.4.3.8 O—Outcrop, natural slopes and embankments,
- 6.4.3.9 P—Push tube, hand, specify type,
- 6.4.3.10 Q—Push tube, mechanical, specify type,
- 6.4.3.11 R—Road cut,
- 6.4.3.12 S—Surface, sampled with shovel, scoop, spoon, pick, etc.,
- 6.4.3.13 T—Tunnel, shaft, or mine,
- 6.4.3.14 W—Test hole, drilled, completed as well,
- 6.4.3.15 X—Test hole, drilled, not completed as a well, and

NOTE 10—Components and codes given for “setting”, “type of soil sampling site”, “use of site”, and “reason for data collection or examination” are only suggestions and are not considered absolute or complete lists. The agency or company that uses the Standard may want to alter these lists by deleting, adding, or fully explaining each individual component. The use of codes for the components may not be desirable for the purposes intended by the agency or company, as shown in Fig. 1. The important factor is that the information is included as a part of the data set.

6.4.3 Type of Soil Sampling Site—This data element helps to identify the physical type of soil sampling site. Record the type of site to which these data apply. Suggested site type components and representative codes are (3–5) (see Note 10):

- 6.4.3.1 A—Augered hole, hand, specify type,

ASTM STANDARD PRACTICE
MINIMUM SET OF DATA ELEMENTS TO IDENTIFY A SOIL SAMPLING SITE

Site Identification 391826074370901 Date Prepared Sept. 4, 1991
 Sampled by Roger J. Henning
 Prepared by Roger J. Henning
 Map or Topo Quad and Series Jobs Point Quad, 7.5-minute

Geographic Location:
 Latitude 39 18 26 Latitude Precision +/- 1 sec.
 Longitude 74 37 09 Longitude Precision +/- 1 sec.
 Altitude of Measuring Point--
 Land Surface 10.00 metres/feet feet
 Other _____ metres/feet _____
 Altitude Precision 0.01 feet Datum Reference NAVD - 1929

Political Regimes:
 State or Country Identification New Jersey
 County or County Equivalent Identification Atlantic County
 Additional Identification Garden Township

Source Identifiers:
 Project Identification Jobs Point Dam
 Owner's Name State of New Jersey
 Address of Owner Trenton, NJ
 Source Agency or Company U.S. Geological Survey
 Address of Source Agency 810 Bear Tavern Road, Suite 206
West Trenton, NJ 08628
 Unique Identification of Site Jobs Point Construction Project
Test Hole #3
 Date of First Record for Site October, 1959

Individual Characteristics of the Site:
 Setting Unknown; Near Exit 29 - Garden State Prkwy.
 Type of Soil Sampling Site Bored Hole
 Use of Site Dam Construction
 Reason for Data Collection Construction Design

FIG. 1 Example of Filled-Out Minimum Set of Data Elements Form

6.4.3.16 Z—Other—describe.

6.4.4 *Use of Site*—Record the use of the site or the purpose for which the site was constructed (the former always holds precedence over the latter). If site is used for more than one purpose, also record the subordinate uses. Suggested site use components and representative codes are **(1,2,4,5)** (see Note 10):

6.4.4.1 C—Cut for road construction,

6.4.4.2 F—Dam construction,

6.4.4.3 M—Mine or road tunnel or shaft,

6.4.4.4 Q—Quarry or mine embankment,

6.4.4.5 B—Soil sampling—boring,

6.4.4.6 E—Soil sampling—excavation,

6.4.4.7 S—Soil sampling—surface extraction,

6.4.4.8 T—Test hole for water,

6.4.4.9 G—Test hole for oil and gas,

6.4.4.10 H—Test hole for exploration of minerals,

6.4.4.11 L—Test hole for liquid contaminate extraction,

6.4.4.12 D—Test boring for contaminate detection,

6.4.4.13 A—Test boring for construction,

6.4.4.14 W—Hazardous and non-hazardous release site excavation,

6.4.4.15 U—Unknown, and

6.4.4.16 Z—Other—describe.

6.4.5 *Reason for Data Collection or Examination*—Record the reason for which data were collected from or examined at the site. If the data were collected or examined for more than one purpose, record the subordinate reasons. Suggested data components and representative codes are (see Note 10):

6.4.5.1 A—Agricultural survey,

6.4.5.2 G—Construction design,

6.4.5.3 B—Research,

6.4.5.4 C—Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), amended by Superfund Amendments Reauthorization Act (SARA),

6.4.5.5 R—Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA),

6.4.5.6 D—Drinking water regulations,

6.4.5.7 E—Exploration (water),

6.4.5.8 L—Local ordinance,

6.4.5.9 S—State regulations, other than CERCLA/SARA or RCRA,

6.4.5.10 F—Federal regulations, other than CERCLA/SARA or RCRA,

6.4.5.11 I—Environmental issues,

6.4.5.12 J—Judicial/litigation,

6.4.5.13 M—Mining regulations,

6.4.5.14 N—Natural resources exploration,

6.4.5.15 P—Property transfer,

6.4.5.16 V—Reconnaissance,

6.4.5.17 U—Unknown, and

6.4.5.18 Z—Other—describe.

7. Sample Form

7.1 An example of a generalized form for recording a minimum set of data elements for a soil sampling site is shown in Fig. 2. An example of a filled-out form is shown in Fig. 1.

8. Keywords

8.1 key data elements; sediment; site coordinates; site identification; site location; soils; soil sample collection

ASTM STANDARD PRACTICE
MINIMUM SET OF DATA ELEMENTS TO IDENTIFY A SOIL SAMPLING SITE

Site Identification _____ Date Prepared _____ Sampled by _____ Prepared by _____ Map or Topo Quad and Series _____
Geographic Location: Latitude _____ Latitude Precision _____ Longitude _____ Longitude Precision _____ Altitude of Measuring Point-- Land Surface _____ metres/feet _____ Other _____ metres/feet _____ Altitude Precision _____ Datum Reference _____
Political Regimes: State or Country Identification _____ County or County Equivalent Identification _____ Additional Identification _____
Source Identifiers: Project Identification _____ Owner's Name _____ Address of Owner _____ Source Agency or Company _____ Address of Source Agency _____ Unique Identification of Site _____ Date of First Record for Site _____
Individual Characteristics of the Site: Setting _____ Type of Soil Sampling Site _____ Use of Site _____ Reason for Data Collection _____

FIG. 2 Example of Minimum Set of Data Elements Form

REFERENCES

<p>(1) U.S. Department of the Interior, "Earth Manual, Water Resources Technical Publication, Second Edition," <i>Water and Power Resources Service</i>, 1980.</p> <p>(2) Casagrande, A., "Classification and Identification of Soils," <i>Transactions, ASCE</i>, 1948.</p> <p>(3) Mathey, S. B., ed., <i>National Water Information System User's Manual</i>, Vol 2, Chapter 4. "Ground-Water Site Inventory System," U.S. Geological Survey, Open-File Report 89-587, 1990.</p> <p>(4) Boulding, J. R., "Description and Sampling of Contaminated Soils, A Field Pocket Guide," <i>Center for Environmental Research Information</i>, U.S. EPA, EPA/625/12-91/002, Cincinnati, OH, 1991.</p> <p>(5) Boulding, J. R., <i>Description and Sampling of Contaminated Soils, A Field Guide, Second Edition</i>, Lewis Publishers, Boca Raton, FL, 1994.</p> <p>(6) McGraw-Hill, <i>Dictionary of Scientific and Technical Terms</i>, Fourth Edition, McGraw-Hill, 1989.</p>	<p>(7) Bates, R. L., and Jackson, J. A., <i>Glossary of Geology</i>, Third Edition, American Geological Institute, Alexandria, VA, 1987.</p> <p>(8) Soil Science Society of America, <i>Glossary of Soil Science Terms</i>, SSSA, Madison, WI, 1987.</p> <p>(9) U.S. Geological Survey, <i>National Handbook of Recommended Methods for Water-Data Acquisition</i>, Chapter 3—"Sediment" Office of Data Coordination, Reston, VA, 1978.</p> <p>(10) U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), <i>Locational Data Policy Implementation Guidance: Guide to the Policy</i>, EPA/220/B-92-008, U.S. EPA Office of Administrative and Resources Management (PMD-211D), Washington, DC, 1992.</p> <p>(11) U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), <i>Locational Data Policy Implementation Guidance: Guide to Selecting Latitude/Longitude Collection Methods</i>, EPA/220/B-92-008, U.S. EPA Office</p>
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 - (13) U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), *Definitions for the Minimum Set of Data Elements for Ground Water Quality*, EPA 813/B-92-002, U.S. EPA Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water, Washington, DC, 1992.
 - (14) U.S. Department of Commerce, “Representation of Geographic Point Locations for Information Interchange,” *Federal Information Standards (FIPS) Publication 70-1*, National Institute for Standards and Technology, Washington, DC, June 23, 1986.
 - (15) Texas Natural Resources Information System, *Ground-Water Data INTERFACE, Users Reference Manual*, Texas Natural Resources Information System, November 20, 1986.
 - (16) U.S. Department of Commerce, “American National Standard Codes for the Representation of Names of Countries, Dependencies, and Areas of Special Sovereignty for Information Interchange,” *Federal Information Standards (FIPS) Publication 104-1*, National Institute for Standards and Technology, Washington, DC, May 12, 1986.
 - (17) U.S. Department of Commerce, “Codes for the Identification of the States, the District of Columbia and Outlying Areas of the United States, and Associated Areas,” *Federal Information Standards (FIPS) Publication 5-2*, National Institute for Standards and Technology, Washington, DC, May 28, 1987.
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 - (19) Edwards, M. D., and Josefson, B. M., *Identification Codes for Organizations Listed in Computerized Data Systems of the U.S. Geological Survey*, U.S. Geological Survey, Open-File Report 82-921, 1982.

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