



# SNAPSHOT OF JEWISH DAY CAMPS IN NORTH AMERICA 2017

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HIGHLIGHTS FROM  
**FOUNDATION FOR JEWISH CAMP**  
2017 DAY CAMP CENSUS

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*With the partnership of*  
UJA Federation of New York  
JCamp180  
Jewish Community Center Association (JCCA)  
National Ramah Commission (Ramah)  
Union for Reform Judaism (URJ)  
Association of Independent Jewish Camps (AIJC)

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# ABOUT THE 2017 CAMP CENSUS

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The Foundation for Jewish Camp Day Camp Census 2017 portrays selected characteristics of nonprofit Jewish day camps across North America. The fourth annual report focuses on some key measures of Jewish day summer camps: the campers and enrollment patterns, professional staff, revenue, expenditures, and more. The analysis introduces several composite measures that extend the raw information derived from the survey of day camp professionals conducted in the fall of 2017.

## WHICH CAMPS ARE INCLUDED IN THIS REPORT?

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The working definition of day camps participating in this Census is:

Day camp refers to an entity that provides programs on a scheduled basis during the summer months for children 3 years of age and older. They offer multiple week summer experiences, and encourage multi-year camper participation for at least 4 consecutive summers. In addition, for purposes of inclusion in this Census, day camps satisfy the following criteria:

- They have an explicit Jewish mission, celebrate or explore Shabbat in some manner, create a knowledge of or connection to Israel, and have operated for at least one camp season.
- They are located in the USA or Canada.
- They have a certificate of insurance.
- They register as, or are part of, an organization with 501(c)3 status in the US, or the equivalent in Canada.
- They demonstrate good governance and sustainability by having written governance policies, an active board, and a financial plan and/or budgets that demonstrate fiscal health.

The findings reported here represent day camps during summer 2017. They derive from 165 completed surveys, an increase of 35 over the number participating than in the 2016 day camp survey. Still, the field of Jewish day camp is larger still, and we expect the sample to grow as we build more connections in the coming years. While we have no complete and definitive list of Jewish day camps in North America, we do know that the vast majority of youngsters attend camps that are associated with the JCC Association (JCCA) and the smaller networks of Jewish day camps participating in this study. We acknowledge that Chabad day camps are significantly underreported, as are individual day camps run by Conservative and Reform congregations, across North America.



The survey permitted “no answers,” meaning that fewer than 165 respondents answered some questions. For some questions, we augmented the survey responses with additional information from other sources. Where appropriate, we compare the results with the 2015 and 2016 similar studies.

## ABOUT THE CAMPS

Over 60% of the camps are JCCA-affiliated day camps (97). An additional 28 camps are affiliated with other movements, and 40 are independent.

### Affiliation of Participating Day Camps

	2015	2016	2017
JCCA	82	90	97
Others	13	27	68
Total	95	117	165

### Affiliation of Non-JCCA Day Camps

	2016	2017
National Ramah	4	4
Chabad	3	6
URJ	2	4
Young Judaea	1	1
B'nai Akiva	1	2
Other	2	3
Independent/No affiliation	14	48
Total	27	68

## JEWISH DENOMINATION

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Almost 60% of the day camps (100) define their denomination as “Community” and another 14 as “Pluralist or Transdenominational.” Only a small number of camps see themselves as aligned with the three largest Jewish denominations, Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform (15 in all). The eschewing of ideological or denominational categories in part reflects the nature of the market for day camps. Although the day camps are sponsored by Jewish agencies and institutions and are attended by mostly Jewish campers, Jewish day camps are community based and appeal to a range of campers from varied religious affiliations and religious and ethnic backgrounds.

Denominational Alignment of Day Camps	2016	2017
Orthodox	2	7
Community	57	100
Conservative	8	8
Pluralist or Transdenominational	14	14
Reform	5	11
Secular	7	10
Sephardic	1	1
Traditional	3	4
Zionist	2	2
Other	18	8
Total	117	165

## REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF DAY CAMPS

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Nearly half of the day camps are located in the Northeast (70), with the other US camps almost equally divided among the major regions of the country and an additional 8 are located in Canada. This distribution more closely resembles the geographic distribution of the Jewish population across North America than Jewish overnight camps. After all, the day camps serve local populations of Jews and others within their communities.



Region	2015	2016	2017
Northeast	45	53	70
Midwest	23	22	27
South	14	17	33
West	14	18	27
Canada	2	7	8

## CAMP SIZE

Camps vary widely in size. On the low-end of the spectrum, nearly a half of the day camps in our sample (44%) served under 300 campers during summer 2017. At the other end, 18% of the day camps served more than 700 campers.

### Size of Camp by Percentage of Day Camps and Campers

Size of Camp	Percentage of Camps	Percentage of Campers
Under 300	44%	18%
300-499	24%	20%
500-699	14%	19%
700 or more	18%	43%
Total	100%	100%

While many camps served under 300 campers, just 18% of the campers in Jewish day camps in our sample attend such camps. The largest camps (enrollment of 700+) are the venues for 43% of the campers.

## DAY CAMP AND CONNECTIONS TO OTHER JEWISH EXPERIENCES

The vast majority (79%) of camps are connected to an early childhood center (ECE), and 18% have ties to a Jewish overnight camp. These relationships can help advance children and



young families on their Jewish journeys, with all participating institutions acting as connectors to one another advancing the goal of having ECE children attend Jewish day camp and day camp alumni move on to Jewish overnight camps. Clearly, day camps have an interest in fostering relationships with such comparable institutions.

## PROGRAMS

152 of the responding day camps reported program information, and from those camps, 545 distinct programs were reported. Of them, 239 were specialty programs, 23 were travel programs, and 16 were special needs programs. Generally, camps reported a slight increase in the number of programs. The mix of programs remains largely the same in 2017 as in 2015 and 2016, albeit with a few variations.

### Landscape of Programs

	2015	2016	2017
<b>Number of Programs</b>			
Number of reporting camps	98	117	152
Overall total number of programs	502	478	545
<b>Programs by Type</b>			
Total number of traditional programs	199	186	254
Total number of specialty programs	223	220	239
Total number of travel programs	43	27	23
Total number of special needs programs	21	18	16
Total number of other programs	13	27	13

Just over a third (35%) of the responding camps reported that they hire, “staff (perhaps for specialty areas) from an outside organization that has brand name recognition.” Among the very wide variety of specialties reported were gymnastics, soccer, archery, karate, Chabad, chess, science, theater, rugby, sports in general, Judaics, fashion, and dance. More generally, sports and science encompassed most of the open-ended answers.



## DAY CAMPER ENROLLMENT

In 2017, the 153 Jewish day camps in this survey that provided enrollment information served a total of 69,504 unique campers.

To obtain a reasonable estimate of year-over-year camp growth, we turned to a sub-sample of 133 day camps that submitted enrollment data in both 2016 and 2017. From 2016 to 2017, these camps reported a 1.5% growth (from approximately 44,675 to 45,296 campers), indicative of a global growth trend in the Jewish day camp sector throughout North America. The past year's growth follows a 3% estimated growth from 2015 to 2016, derived from similar methods in last year's report.

### Day Camper Enrollment

	2015	2016	2017
Number of reporting camps	79	130	153
Number of campers	44,890	65,488	69,504
Minimum number of campers	71	44	32
Maximum number of campers	2,020	2,042	3,000
Median number of campers	473	441	336
Average number of campers	568	503	454

In determining their maximum capacity, almost half the camps (49%) reported that programming space was the most important criterion, while about a fifth cited reasons related to shelter, followed by almost a sixth who reported the size of the pool, and 9% who answered, "bus transportation/space."

In 2017, similar to 2016, camps reported 62% of campers were returning children and 38% were new to the day camp. The stable and high numbers of returning campers can be seen as a healthy sign, pointing to the ongoing demand for Jewish day camps in the marketplace.

## Day Camper Retention

	2015	2016	2017
<b>New and Returning Campers</b>			
Number of reporting camps	48	114	152
Average percent campers new to camp	39%	38%	38%
<b>Retention</b>			
Number of reporting camps	55	114	153
Average return rate of eligible campers	66%	62%	62%

## CAMPER CHARACTERISTICS: GENDER, JEWS, INTERFAITH PARENTS

The survey collected respondents' estimates of several characteristics. More detailed analysis found that gender distributions hardly varied by grade, region or size of camp.

In addition, relying upon each camp's definition of who identifies as Jewish (asking, "About what percentage of campers in your day camp are Jewish, as your day camp defines Jewish?"), we learn that 2/3 of the campers are identified as Jewish, with a higher percentage in Canada and lower in the South. In addition, it seems the smallest and largest camps report higher proportions of campers who identify as Jewish than those of intermediate size.

About 23% of all campers (respondents estimate) derive from interfaith couples, where one parent identifies as Jewish and one not. That would mean that one third of the campers who identify as Jewish have one parent who identifies as Jewish, and two thirds have two parents who identify as Jewish (or a single parent who identifies as Jewish). Regionally, the interfaith couple rate is highest in the West, with the figures suggesting that about half the campers who identify as Jewish derive from interfaith backgrounds. Size of camp bears little consistent relationship with the proportion from interfaith parental backgrounds.





### Day Campers' Gender, Percent Jewish and Percent with Interfaith Parents by Region

Region	Percent Identifying as Female/Male	Percent Identifying as Jewish	Percent with Interfaith Parents
Northeast	48/52	67	22
Midwest	48/52	66	20
South	48/52	60	21
West	50/50	68	34
Canada	50/50	76	16
Total	49/51	66	23

### Day Campers' Gender, Percent Jewish and Percent with Interfaith Parents by Size of Camp

Size of Camp	Percent Identifying as Female/Male	Percent Identifying as Jewish	Percent with Interfaith Parents
Under 300	50	69	24
300-499	49	59	24
500-699	46	64	20
700+	48	72	22
Total	49	66	23

## REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF DAY CAMPERS

The analysis divides the camps by five geographic areas North America: Northeast, South, Midwest, West and Canada. The average number of unique campers is the highest in Canada (619), home to just 8 day camps in the survey, and lowest in the Midwest (341).



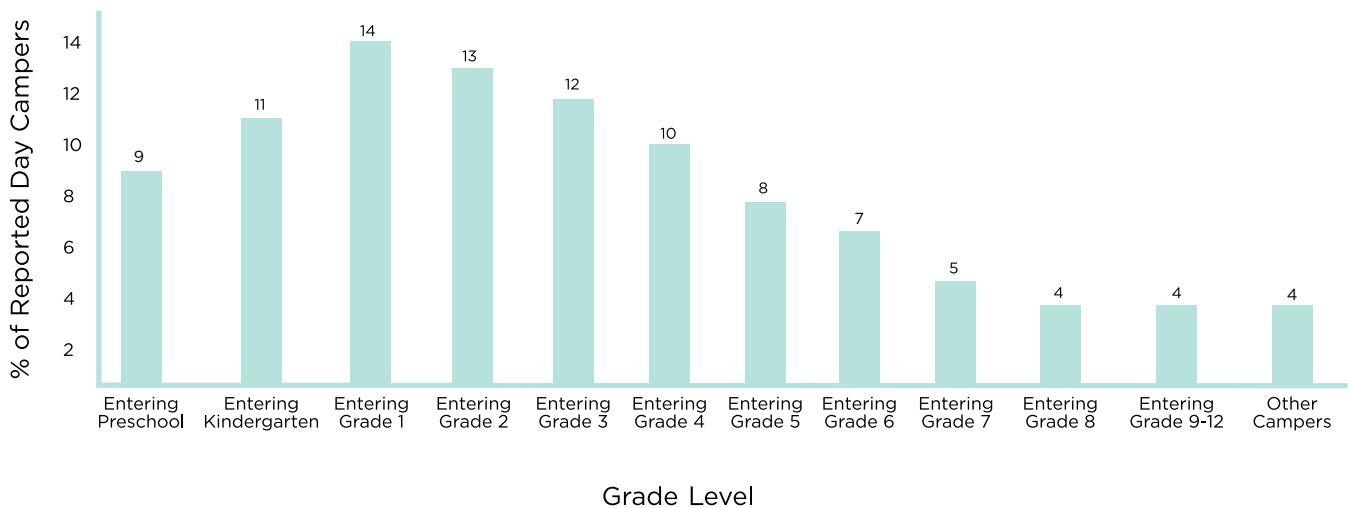
## Average Number of Campers by Region

Region	Average number of unique campers per camp
Northeast	478
Midwest	341
South	500
West	404
Canada	619
Total	454

## GRADE-LEVEL DISTRIBUTION OF DAY CAMPERS

The distribution of campers by grade level peaks in grade 1 and remains high from kindergarten through grade 3. As many as 69% of the campers are entering grades three or below. The number of campers entering first and second grade together account for more than a quarter (27%) of all Jewish day campers. Enrollment by grade declines precipitously after grade three, reaching nearly zero among those entering grade 10. As campers age through their day camp program, some take advantage of age-appropriate programming, which could include travel and CIT programs in the upper grades.

### Breakdown of Grade-Level Distribution



## CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Over 3000 campers (3,224) with disabilities attend Jewish day camp, almost 5% of the overall population of campers. A large majority of camps (109 out of 165 reporting) provide opportunities for campers with disabilities. Within those camps, the vast majority (99) offer full inclusion options and 34 camps also offer partial inclusion opportunities.

	Number of Day Camps
<b>Serving campers with disabilities</b>	109*
Only campers with disabilities	4
Full inclusion	99
Partial inclusion	34
Both partial and full	24
Separate program	17
Other	3

\*Some of the 83 camps that shared that they are serving campers with disabilities selected more than one way in which those campers are served at their camp.

## DAY CAMP STAFF AND COMPENSATION

Jewish day camps employed over 13,000 staff members (not including Counselors-in-Training), with an average of 83 staff members per camp at the 146 that reported.

### Number of Day Camp Staff

Total Staff (not including CITs)	2015	2016	2017
Number of reporting camps	83	112	146
Total number of staff members	10,295	12,429	13,685
Average number of staff members	124	107	97



As many as 85% of the Jewish day camps had CIT programs in 2017 (almost equivalent to the 2016 percentage from the 2016 Census report, and the 2015 percentages from the 2015 JData report). The grade levels of CITs almost always include grades 9 and 10, with camps engaging CITs as young as 7th graders and as old as 12th graders. A line of research points to the educational value of providing Jewish experiences for Jewish adolescents and, presumably CIT programs in Jewish day camps fulfill that objective.<sup>1</sup>

### CIT at Programs

	2015	2016	2017
Number of reporting camps	85	117	153
Percent of camps with a CIT program	88%	87%	85%

Over 90% of the staff hold summer-only positions, with under 20% divided between full-time and part-time year-round positions.

### Day Camp Staff: Summertime/Year-round, Part/Full-time

Part-Time & Full-Time Staff	2015	2016	2017
Number of reporting camps	83	112	147
Overall percent of staff summer-only	92%	84%	91%
Overall percent of staff year-round part-time	5%	8%	5%
Overall percent of staff year-round full-time	3%	8%	4%

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Cohen, Steven M. Fink, Steven. *Building Progressive Zionist Activists: Exploring the Impact of Habonim Dror*. Habonim Dror Camp Association. 1 December 2013: <http://www.bjpa.org/Publications/details.cfm?PublicationID=18607>

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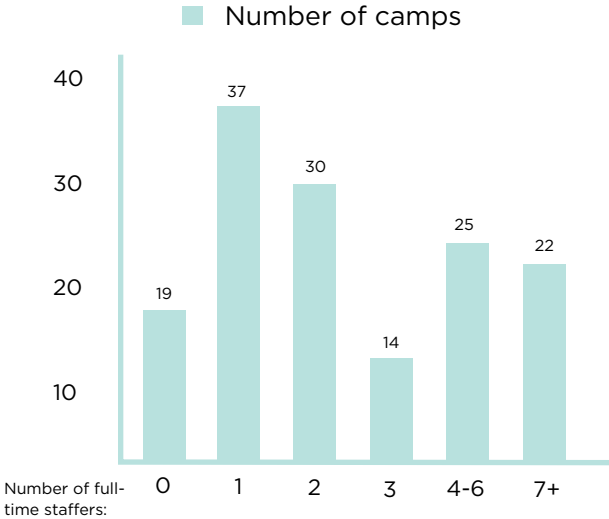
The top professionals at the camps within our sample devote an average of 70% of their professional time to their day camp jobs. Many day camp professionals working at JCCs have various responsibilities within the organization alongside their work leading the day camp.

**Dedicated Time of Top Day Camp Professionals**

Top camp professional dedicated time	2015	2016	2017
Number of reporting camps	79	114	146
Average percentage of top camp professional’s time devoted to day camp	66%	89%	70%

The number of camps with year-round full-time staff is given below. Over 80% have at least one such staff member, and the median number of such staff is two. We attribute the fluctuation from year to year to the changing numbers and types of camps that participate in the Census.

**Total Number of Unique Year-Round Full-time Staff**



Note: this may include full-time staff that work at camp and have other responsibilities in their portfolio.

**DAY CAMP COUNSELOR SALARIES**

Respondents reported on both minimum and maximum salaries for unit counselors, ranging between lowest salary points averaging about \$1,500 and highest salary points averaging about \$3,500, respectively. Salaries are lowest among day camps in the Northeast.

## Approximate Average Maximum and Minimum Day Camp Counselor Salaries by Region

Region	Maximum	Minimum
Northeast	\$3,200	\$1,000
Midwest	\$3,700	\$1,700
South	\$3,600	\$1,500
West	\$3,700	\$2,200
Canada	\$3,400	\$2,000
Average	\$3,500	\$1,500

As might be expected, salaries vary by size of camp.

Average salaries for unit counselors are lower in the smallest camps (under 300 campers) where the average minimum is about \$1400 as compared with over \$1700 in camps with 300-499 campers. The smaller camps also report lower average maximum salaries of almost \$3,200, as against almost \$4100 in camps with 700 or more campers.

## Approximate Average Maximum and Minimum Counselor Salaries by Size of Day Camp

Size of Camp	Maximum	Minimum
Under 300	\$3,200	\$1,400
300-499	\$3,600	\$1,700
500-699	\$3,600	\$1,400
700+	\$4,100	\$1,400
Total	\$3,500	\$1,500

Beyond the posted salaries, 38% of camps offer incentives or bonuses to retain selected staff members.



## DAY CAMP TUITION, REVENUE, & FINANCIAL AID

Maximum weekly tuition in Jewish day camp averages \$520 (somewhat higher than last year) with a median cost of \$405 (virtually unchanged over the last two years). The rising mean tuition derives in large part from the emergence in the 2017 data set of day camps with tuitions exceeding \$1400 per week.

In 2017, weekly tuition ranged from a low of \$160 to a peak of \$2380.

### Day Camp Tuition

	2015	2016	2017
Number of reporting camps	63	102	129
Average maximum weekly tuition	\$468	\$470	\$520
Minimum weekly tuition	\$217	\$150	\$160
Maximum weekly tuition	\$1,465	\$1,395	\$2380
Median weekly tuition	\$410	\$403	\$405

Tuition varies inconsistently by size of camp.

### Tuition by Size of Camp

Region	Maximum weekly tuition for summer 2016 core program
Under 300	\$520
300-499	\$570
500-699	\$450
700+	\$530
Total	\$520



Total revenue average is highest in the Northeast (at about \$ 2.2 million), nearly four times the average in the West.

### Average Revenue by Region

Region	Total Revenue
Northeast	\$2,178,000
Midwest	\$481,000
South	\$620,000
West	\$552,000
Canada	\$804,000
Overall Average	\$1,287,000

For the 103 day camps reporting financial details, total revenue amounted to over \$133 million for summer 2017. Since only about two thirds of the camps provided information on revenue, we can readily surmise that the total industry expenditure well exceed \$133 million.

## FINANCIAL AID

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Nearly \$9 million in financial aid was awarded (with 146 camps reporting), a figure higher than that reported in 2016 (with 108 camps reporting), in large part owing to the growth in the number of camps providing such information, but also reflecting the far smaller size of the day camps that came into the sample in 2017.

The 146 camps in 2017 distributed \$59,000 per camp in financial aid, divided on average among 68 campers. The average award was almost \$900 per camper.





## Day Camp Financial Aid

	Data Collected
<b>Number of reporting camps</b>	146
Sum total financial aid disbursed	\$8,622,000
Average total financial aid	\$59,000
Average total unique campers receiving aid	68
Average percent campers receiving aid	14%
Average financial aid award	\$870

The average number of campers receiving financial assistance is highest in Canada (121) and lowest in the West and Midwest (39).

## Number of Campers Receiving Financial Assistance by Region

Region	Average unique number of campers receiving financial assistance
Northeast	94
Midwest	39
South	47
West	39
Canada	121
Total	68



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Foundation for Jewish Camp (FJC) thanks the organizations and camp movements that supported this project: UJA Federation of New York, JCamp180, National Ramah Commission (Ramah), Union for Reform Judaism (URJ), Jewish Community Center Association (JCCA), and Association for Independent Jewish Camps (AIJC). FJC also values and appreciates the efforts of the camp professionals who helped develop the questions and tested the survey.

Our profound thanks to the FJC Board of Directors whose support of research and data is critical to the success of the Foundation and of the field.

Heartfelt appreciation to Marci Soifer, Operations & Planning Director at the Foundation for Jewish Camp, for championing and bringing this project to fruition with support from Libbie Brooks, FJC Data Intern.

Lastly, we would like to thank all Jewish day camps that offer over thousands of campers and high-school and college-aged counselors transformative Jewish summer experiences, strengthening their connection to each other and their essential Jewishness.

*Please note that the usage of "interfaith marriage," "identify as Jewish," and "identify as [gender]" are language used by the Foundation for Jewish Camp. Prof. Steven M. Cohen prefers, "inter-group marriage," "in-marriage" and "Jews," respectively, in addition to "male" and "female".*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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### **Professor Steven M. Cohen**

Steven M. Cohen is Research Professor of Jewish Social Policy at HUC-JIR, and Director of the Berman Jewish Policy Archive at Stanford University. In 1992 he made aliyah, and taught at The Hebrew University, having previously taught at Queens College, Yale, and JTS.

Among his books are *The Jew Within* (with Arnold Eisen), *Two Worlds of Judaism: The Israeli and American Experience* (with Charles Liebman), and *Sacred Strategies: Transforming Synagogues from Functional to Visionary* (with Isa Aron, Lawrence Hoffman and Ari Kelman, Isa Aron, Lawrence A. Hoffman). He was the lead researcher on the Jewish Community Study of New York: 2011, and consultant to the Pew studies of American Jews and Israeli society.

Prof. Cohen received an honorary doctorate from the Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies, the Marshall Sklare Award, and a National Jewish Book Award, and served as president of the Association for the Social Scientific Study of Jewry, 2012-16.

Married to Rabbi Marion Lev-Cohen, Steven and Marion live in Jerusalem and New York.



# ABOUT THE FOUNDATION FOR JEWISH CAMP

The key to the Jewish future is Jewish camp. We know from research – and nearly two decades' experience – that this is where young people find Jewish role models and create enduring Jewish friendships. It's where they forge a vital, lifelong connection to their essential Jewishness.

Suddenly, all those Shabbat song sessions and campfire stories take on new importance – and urgency. So we're devoted to helping Jewish camps and summer programs thrive. We gather data, build new programs, provide operational support and help recruit campers. We've elevated camp management into a true profession. And we work to elevate Jewish camp on the cultural and philanthropic agenda.

In short, our mission is to help Jewish camps achieve their mission: to create transformative experiences – and the Jewish future.

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