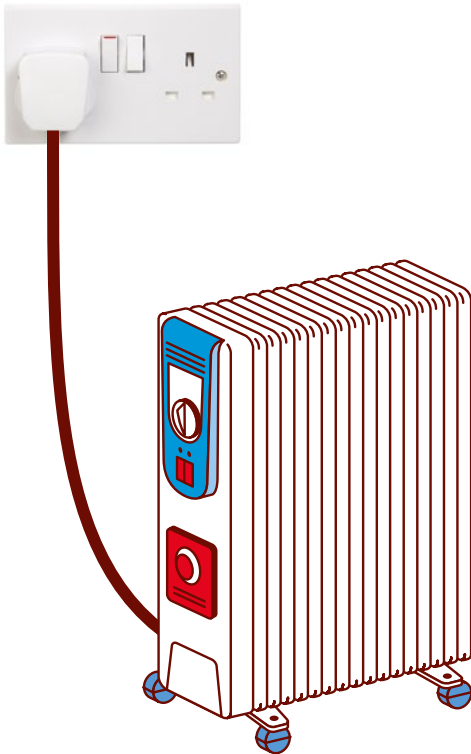


**Safety guidance**

# Landlords' guide to electrical safety

England & Wales



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*Typical examples of potentially dangerous electrical installations*

# 1 Introduction

## Why you need this guide and how it can help you

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Electrical Safety First has produced this guide to help landlords understand their responsibilities for electrical safety in their rental properties – and to provide practical advice on what is required to ensure the safety of tenants.

**Great Britain has a relatively good record of electrical safety but the most recent figures available show that in a typical year:**

- Every year a number of deaths and injuries in UK homes are caused by faulty electrics and electrical equipment. Almost half of all domestic fires are caused by electricity.
- There will be approximately 20,000 accidental electrical fires in homes, resulting in around 50 deaths and 3500 injuries.

Most accidents involving electricity in the home arise through faults in, or misuse of, domestic appliances or the electrical installation. Another major cause is objects being placed too close to a heat source, such as an electric heater or lamp.

The three major hazards from electricity in the home are electric shock, fire and burns.

These can occur through:

- The electrical installation and appliances deteriorating over time.
- Damage to switches, sockets and appliances.
- Misuse of the installation and appliances.
- Poor or lack of maintenance of the installation.
- Vandalism.

<sup>1</sup> Data supplied by the Department for Communities and Local Government, 15/02/2012.

# 2 The law and what you need to know

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**Landlords have a legal duty to ensure that their rental property, and any electrical equipment provided, is safe before a tenancy begins and throughout its duration.**

## Five Yearly Electrical Checks

From 1st June 2020, private landlords in England will be required to have the electrical installation in their rental properties checked by a qualified electrician to ensure that they are safe.

This means that:

- Electrical installations must be inspected and tested prior to the start of a new tenancy from 1st July 2020
- Checks must be carried out on any existing tenancies by 1st April 2021

*These checks must then be carried out on a five yearly basis.*

A copy of the most recent electrical safety condition report (EICR) must be provided to both new and retained tenants.

If the inspection reveals any action that needs to be taken, this remedial work must be carried out within 28 days. It must meet British Standard BS 7671, with appropriate certification issued. You can find out more about periodic inspections in Section 5 of this guide.

As the landlord, you are responsible for making sure that the person who completes the check is suitably competent. Using an electrician or firm that is a member of an accredited registration scheme operated by a recognised body will give you the confidence that this has been achieved.

Visit [www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/findanelectrician](http://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/findanelectrician)

Full details of the legislation can be found at: [www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/312/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/312/contents/made)

We recommend that landlords in Wales also carry out five yearly checks on the electrical installations in their rental properties, to make sure that they fulfil their obligations under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, which states that a property must be maintained so that it is safe for human habitation.

The **Occupiers' Liability Act 1957** and **Occupiers' Liability Act 1984** – give landlords a duty of care for anyone visiting their property. In short, a landlord could be prosecuted if someone is injured on their land or premises – regardless of whether the visitor is there lawfully (the 1957 Act) or trespassing (the 1984 Act.)

## Part P of the Building Regulations

In January 2005, the **Building Regulations for England and Wales** were amended to include Part P, which covers electrical safety in dwellings. This means that all electrical installation work undertaken in a home in England or Wales must, by law, comply with Part P of the Building Regulations.

This requires 'reasonable provision... in the design and installation of electrical installations ...to protect persons operating, maintaining or altering the installations from fire or injury'.

Except for some types of minor work, if you intend to carry out electrical installation work in domestic premises, you must either:

- notify a building control body (usually your local authority building control department) before the work starts, or
- have it carried out by an electrician who is registered with one of the Government-authorised Part P competent person scheme operators, or
- In England, have the work inspected and tested by a registered third party certifier.

#### More information can be found in:

For England, Approved Document P (2013 edition) [www.planningportal.gov.uk/uploads/br/BR\\_PDF\\_AD\\_P\\_2013.pdf](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/uploads/br/BR_PDF_AD_P_2013.pdf)

For Wales, Approved Document P (2006 edition with 2010 amendments)

[www.planningportal.gov.uk/uploads/br/BR\\_PDF\\_AD\\_P\\_2010.pdf](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/uploads/br/BR_PDF_AD_P_2010.pdf)

In October 2006, the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (England and Wales) became law. It replaces most previous fire safety legislation and applies to all non-domestic premises, including common parts of blocks of flats, and houses in multiple occupation (HMOs).

*Guidance on carrying out a fire safety risk assessment for sleeping accommodation can be downloaded free from:*

[www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/422192/9281\\_Sleeping\\_Accommodation\\_v2.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/422192/9281_Sleeping_Accommodation_v2.pdf)

## Communal areas

A landlord is also responsible for the communal areas of a house, block of flats, or an estate that residents use in common with other tenants, such as:

- Entrance halls and foyers.
- Lifts and stairwells.
- Corridors.
- Landings.
- Kitchens and bathrooms.
- Laundries.
- Gymnasiums.
- Swimming pools and other leisure facilities.
- Parking and refuse areas.
- Pathways.
- Gardens.

### Smoke Alarms and CO Detectors

From 1st October 2015, when properties are occupied by tenants, the landlord must ensure that:

- a smoke alarm is equipped on each storey of the premises on which there is a room used wholly or partly as living accommodation;
- a carbon monoxide alarm is equipped in any room of the premises which is used wholly or partly as living accommodation and contains a solid fuel burning combustion appliance;
- Checks must be made by or on behalf of the landlord to make sure that each prescribed alarm is in proper working order on the day the tenancy begins (if it is a new tenancy).

The full legislation can be found at: [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2015/9780111133439/pdfs/ukdsi\\_9780111133439\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2015/9780111133439/pdfs/ukdsi_9780111133439_en.pdf)

# 3 Electrical installations

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An electrical installation comprises all the fixed electrical equipment that is supplied through the electricity meter. It includes the cables that are usually hidden in the walls and ceilings, accessories (such as sockets, switches and light fittings), and the consumer unit (fusebox) that contains all the fuses, circuit-breakers and, preferably residual current devices (RCDs).<sup>2</sup>

**There are many factors that contribute to a 'good' electrical installation, such as ensuring:**

- There are enough sockets for electrical appliances, to minimise the use of multiway socket adapters and trailing leads.
- Covers are in place to prevent fingers coming into contact with live parts (broken or damaged switches and sockets should be replaced without delay).
- A residual current device (RCD) is installed to provide additional protection against electric shock (see also Section 6 of this guide).
- Satisfactory earthing arrangements are in place to ensure that a fuse or circuit breaker can quickly clear an electrical fault before it causes an electric shock or fire.
- Satisfactory protective bonding arrangements are in place where required (so any electric shock risk is minimised until a fault is cleared).
- Sufficient circuits are provided to avoid danger and minimise inconvenience in the event of a fault.
- Cables are correctly selected and installed in relation to the fuse or circuit-breaker protecting the circuit.

Over time, and with the wear and tear of regular use, the installation will start to deteriorate. Connections can work loose (a potential fire hazard), equipment can be damaged, and building and maintenance work can have an impact on the wiring.

<sup>2</sup> An RCD (residual current device) is a life-saving device which is designed to prevent you from getting a fatal electric shock if you touch something live, such as a bare wire. It provides a level of protection that ordinary fuses or circuit breakers cannot.

**One simple thing you can do to see if your electrical installation is safe, is to carry out a regular visual check.**

**Things to look out for include:**

- Broken accessories (such as sockets and light switches).
- Signs of scorching around sockets due to overloading.
- Overheating of electrical equipment (such as lampholders fitted with the wrong lamps) – usually detected by a strong, often fishlike, smell.
- Damaged cables to portable electrical appliances or trailing cables/flexes.
- Lack of RCD protection for circuits, particularly those supplying equipment in the bath/shower room or garden.

Regular visual safety checks do not replace the need for a periodic inspection to be carried out every five years.

Electrical Safety First has produced a Landlords interim checklist to assist those carrying out such checks. This may be downloaded from

[www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/guides-and-advice/for-landlords](http://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/guides-and-advice/for-landlords)



Electrical Safety First has developed a Smartphone app to assist those carrying out visual safety checks on a domestic property which can be downloaded from

[www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/visualchecks](http://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/visualchecks)

(see also Section 5 of this guide).



*Use the Home 'Electrical Safety Check' app.*

# 4 Certification

## of electrical installation work

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**You should ensure that you receive and keep the paperwork for all completed electrical installation work and periodic inspection and testing. A copy should be provided to your tenants. All certificates and reports should include schedules of inspections and test results.**

The type of certification or report you receive depends on the extent and type of electrical installation work, or inspection and testing, you have had carried out.

### **Electrical certification for new installations, alterations or additions**

Electrical Installation Certificates (EICs) and Minor Electrical Installation Works Certificates (MEIWCs) provide you, as the person responsible for the safety of an electrical installation, with a declaration that the new installation, or alteration or addition, is safe to use at the time it was put into service.

These certificates, if retained, also provide a basis for any further inspection and testing, as they can help save on costly exploratory work which might otherwise be needed in future. Additionally, in the event of a claim that injury or fire was caused by an electrical installation, certificates are documentary evidence which help show that the installation had been installed to a satisfactory standard of safety.

The EIC will indicate whether the electrical work that has been carried out is 'new', an 'addition' or an 'alteration'. The term 'new' applies where the whole installation has

been installed as new, if a complete rewire has been carried out, or where a consumer unit (fusebox) has been replaced.

The term 'addition' applies if an existing installation has been modified by adding one or more new circuits.

The term 'alteration' applies where one or more existing circuits have been modified or extended (for example to add a socket), or items such as a consumer unit (fusebox) and switching equipment have been replaced.

An EIC must be issued for all new electrical installations. It may also be required for an alteration or addition to the installation – depending upon whether or not a new circuit has been installed. Where an alteration or addition is carried out but does not include a new circuit, a MEIWC or an EIC may be used. A Domestic Electrical Installation Certificate is a form of EIC designed specifically for domestic electrical installations.

We strongly recommend that you use a registered electrician to carry out any electrical installation work. Information on how to find a registered electrician can be found on Electrical Safety First's website at [www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/findanelectrician](http://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/findanelectrician)



# 5 Periodic inspection, testing and condition reporting

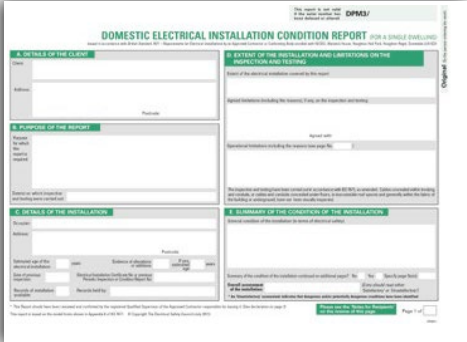
Every electrical installation deteriorates with use and age. You must ensure that your tenant(s) – or anyone entering or using your property – are not put at risk, by ensuring that the electrical installation remains in a safe and serviceable condition.

A periodic inspection checks the condition of an existing electrical installation against BS 7671, the UK Standard for the safety of electrical installations.

## A periodic inspection should:

- Discover if electrical circuits or equipment are overloaded.
- Identify potential electric shock risks and fire hazards.
- Find any defective electrical work.
- Highlight any lack of earthing or bonding. Further information explaining the importance of earthing and bonding can be found at [www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/guides-and-advice/around-the-home/earthing-and-bonding](http://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/guides-and-advice/around-the-home/earthing-and-bonding)

Tests are also carried out on the installation to check that it is safe.



Typical example of a Domestic Electrical Installation Condition Report

After a periodic inspection, you should always be given an Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) containing details of the inspection and testing undertaken, the outcomes of the inspection and testing with recommendations as to what remedial action (if any) is required, and a declaration of whether or not the installation is safe for continued use.

A schedule of circuit details and test results should always be provided as part of the Electrical Installation Condition Report. A copy of this schedule should be kept next to the consumer unit (fusebox) for information purposes.

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## Frequency of periodic inspections

By law, a periodic inspection of the electrical installations in rental properties in England must be carried out every five years. We recommend the same for properties in Wales.

However, the person compiling the Electrical Installation Condition Report may recommend a shorter interval before the next inspection based upon the findings of the inspection and testing that has been carried out.

When a change of tenancy occurs, the landlord or their representative should always carry out a visual check to confirm that a property is safe to re-let. This check should include confirming that there are no broken or missing switches or sockets, no accessible live parts, no signs of burning on electrical equipment and that any installed RCDs operate when the integral test button is pressed.

## Certification of remedial works called for by a condition report

Where the overall result of the periodic inspection is given in the EICR as unsatisfactory, remedial work will be necessary to rectify the issue(s) identified as warranting a code C1 (danger present) or code C2 (potentially dangerous) outcome before the installation can be deemed to be in a satisfactory condition. Any remedial works should be carried out within 28 days. In most cases, probably the most effective, and easy to document, method of

demonstrating that the necessary remedial work has been carried out is by the issue of:

- An Electrical Installation Certificate (EIC), particularly where the remedial work was carried out on more than one circuit, or
- A Minor Electrical Installation Works Certificate where remedial action was only necessary on a single circuit within the property.

It is not necessary for a second “clean” EICR to be issued after any required remedial works have been carried out and certified appropriately as described above. However, the EICR detailing the non-compliances and the associated certification of the remedial works should be kept together in a safe place for future reference. Copies of the certification should be provided to your tenants.

## Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

The Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020 require that every electrical installation in a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) is inspected and tested at least every five years by a suitably qualified person, who should provide a certificate giving the results of the inspection. If your local housing authority asks in writing for this certificate (Electrical Installation Condition report – previously Periodic Inspection Report), you must supply it within seven days of receiving the request. Landlords in Wales are also required to carry out five yearly checks on the installations in HMOs, under the Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation (Wales) Regulations 2006.

# 6 Electrical appliances

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**Most deaths from electric shock and fires in UK homes are caused by misuse of, or faulty, plugs, leads and appliances. But many of these fatalities can be avoided by taking simple steps.**

The safety of electrical appliances relies, to some extent, on the condition of the home's fixed wiring – but misusing electrical appliances will increase the risk of electric shock and fire. For example, after using an iron, winding the flexible cable around it may create a twist or kink in the cable. Repeating this process over time can damage the cable and increase the risk of electric shock or fire. To keep risks to a minimum, you and/or your tenant must ensure that portable electrical equipment is safely used, stored and regularly checked.

## Providing electrical appliances

If you provide appliances (such as a kettle, iron or washing machine) for your tenant(s) you should check that the item carries, at least, a CE Mark – the manufacturer's claim that it meets the minimum requirements of EU legislation. Electrical Safety First recommends the purchasing of appliances that carry additional safety marks, such as the British Standard Kitemark or the 'BEAB Approved' mark, as these can provide greater assurance of electrical safety.

You need to make sure that any appliance you supply is suitable for its location and its intended use. To help ensure your tenants use appliances correctly, you should make copies of the manufacturers' instructions available for them to refer to.

## Product Registration

Make sure that any electrical products that you provide with the tenancy are registered with the manufacturer. This means that if there is a problem and they need to issue a recall or safety notice, the product can be traced. Find out more at [www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/registration](http://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/registration)

You should also tell your tenants to register any products that they bring with them into the property.



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## Checking electrical appliances

To ensure electrical appliances remain safe to use, regular basic safety checks should be carried out.

### For example, you and/or your tenant should check that:

1. There are no cuts or abrasions in the cable covering (sheath).
2. The outer covering of the cable is gripped by the cord grip in the plug top, so that no coloured cable cores are visible from outside of the plug.
3. The plug casing is not cracked and the pins are not bent.
4. There are no signs of overheating or burning, particularly at the plug and socket.
5. There are no loose parts or screws.
6. No part of the appliance is damaged or missing.

Most dangerous defects in electrical appliances can be identified by carrying out such simple checks. For more information on testing electrical appliances, go to

[www.hse.gov.uk/electricity/faq-portable-appliance-testing.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/electricity/faq-portable-appliance-testing.htm)

### Product recalls

You can check to see if any of the electrical equipment or appliances you have provided for the use of your tenants is subject to a product recall by visiting

<http://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/product-recalls/>

## Using electrical appliances outdoors

Any socket supplying electrical equipment used outdoors should be protected by an RCD.

Electrical Safety First recommends that all sockets supplying electrical equipment for outdoor use are protected by a fixed RCD (where the RCD is fitted in the consumer unit (fusebox) or incorporated into a socket-outlet).

Fixed RCDs should be tested at least every six months by pressing the test button marked 'T' or 'Test' – see the instructions that should be on, or next to, the consumer unit.

If there is no RCD in the consumer unit, we strongly recommend that a portable plug-in RCD is provided. Equipment should be plugged into the portable RCD, which is then plugged into the socket. This type of RCD, which costs around £10, should be tested before each use by following the manufacturer's instructions.

# 7 Fire alarms

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## **Electrical accidents are the primary cause of accidental domestic fires in the UK.**

Loose connections in electrical equipment and parts of the electrical installation (such as sockets) can result in fire. Incorrectly selected fuses or circuit-breakers can also lead to overheated cables.

Many fires in the home start in the kitchen and are usually caused by cooking appliances. Other causes of fire include cigarettes and candles, and clothes being hung over heaters to dry.

To safeguard your tenants from the risk of fire, you will need to ensure that there is a suitable fire detection and fire alarm system, which should be regularly tested and maintained.

A properly installed and maintained fire alarm will alert occupants to a fire in its early stages, allowing them to get to a place of safety before escape routes become blocked by smoke or fire. The system should be designed to wake people who are sleeping and to alert them to fire in any hidden areas – such as boiler rooms, storerooms, cellars or lofts (if they contain equipment such as solar PV inverters or central heating boilers) – before the fire affects the escape route.

## **Selecting the fire alarm system**

Consult a fire alarm specialist if you do not currently have a fire alarm system.

The type of fire alarm system you need to provide depends on the type of property you are letting, based on the level of risk.

A small, single-family house will only require smoke alarms, while large HMOs need a more sophisticated system – including both smoke and heat detectors linked to a control panel and alarm sounders.

All residential premises where people are sleeping should have some form of automatic fire detection and warning system. (See also Section 2 of this guide).

## **Testing fire alarm systems**

All fire alarm systems need to be regularly tested to ensure they are working properly.

Basic, routine tests do not demand specialist knowledge and can normally be carried out by you or your tenant(s). Such tests are generally required weekly, where one or more detectors or call points are tested. For more complex systems, the results are required to be recorded in a log book.

# 8 Emergency lighting

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In the event of fire, your tenants need to be able to find their way out of the property to a place of safety. This requires a planned escape route which is kept free from clutter and has sufficient lighting to allow for a fast (and safe) escape.

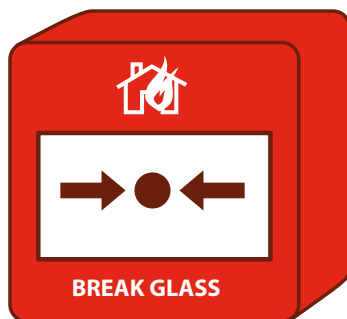
When a fire starts, people move rapidly in distress and panic. At night, when they have been awoken abruptly, they may also be disorientated. So it is important that staircases and escape routes are adequately lit.

More information on risk assessment for emergency lighting can be found on the website of the Industry Committee for Emergency Lighting Ltd (ICEL) at [www.thelia.org.uk](http://www.thelia.org.uk)

Some buildings, such as those listed below, will also need emergency lighting covering the escape route.

They include:

- Large buildings with lengthy exit routes.
- Buildings with a complex layout.
- Buildings with no natural or borrowed lighting along the escape route.
- Buildings accommodating vulnerable people or those at particular risk, such as individuals who are confined to a wheelchair.



# 9 Finding an electrician

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The following organisations are authorised by the Government to register electricians so they can carry out domestic electrical installation work which meets Part P of the Building Regulations.

## **ELECSA**

Telephone: 0333 321 8220

Website: [www.elecsa.co.uk](http://www.elecsa.co.uk)

## **NICEIC**

Telephone: 0870 013 0382

Website: [www.niceic.com](http://www.niceic.com)

## **NAPIT**

Telephone: 0345 543 0330

Website: [www.napit.org.uk](http://www.napit.org.uk)

## **Blue Flame Certification**

Telephone: 0845 194 90 31

Website: [www.blueflamecertification.com](http://www.blueflamecertification.com)

## **STROMA Certification**

Telephone: 0845 621 1111

Website: [www.stroma.com](http://www.stroma.com)

To find a registered electrician in your area, visit:

[www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/  
findanelectrician](http://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/findanelectrician)

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## Find Out More

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### Electrical

For more information about electrical safety in rented properties visit:

[www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk](http://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk)

### Gas

For information about gas safety in rented properties, visit:

[www.GasSafeRegister.co.uk](http://www.GasSafeRegister.co.uk)

### Fire Safety

For information about fire safety in rented properties visit:

[www.gov.uk/firekills](http://www.gov.uk/firekills)

# Electrical Safety First

The UK's electrical safety experts

**Electrical Safety First is the UK charity dedicated to reducing deaths and injuries caused by electrical accidents. Our aim is to ensure everyone in the UK can use electricity safely.**  
[electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk](http://electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk)

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