







PSALM 150: JOIN THE CRESCENDO

Psalm 150

What is 'Join the Crescendo - Vocal edition'?

Introduction & missional priorities

(Discipleship and evangelism)

Vocal instruction

Before you begin

Specifics, technical know-how

Tips for success

What next?

'God doesn't want us to be shy with his gifts, but bold and loving and sensible.' - 2 Timothy 1:7 MSG





Psalm 150 is the driving force behind this resource, as the Psalmist depicts a sense of joy and enthusiasm we hope that you may be able to draw from this in your ministry. God is good and we will praise him in anyway possible in the hope that our efforts will join together in a crescendo of praise to the Lord.

- '1 Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! Praise God in his holy sanctuary!

 Praise him in his stronghold in the sky!
- 2 Praise him for his miracles of might!

 Praise him for his magnificent greatness!
- 3 Praise him with the trumpets blasting!

 Praise him with the piano and guitar!
- 4-5 Praise him with drums and dancing!

 Praise him with the loud, resounding clash of the cymbals!

 Praise him with every instrument you can find!
- 6 Let everyone everywhere JOIN IN THE CRESCENDO of ecstatic praise to Yahweh!

 Hallelujah! Praise to the Lord!'

 (Psalm 150:1-6 The Passion Translation)



WHATIS JOIN THE CRESCENDO'?

'Join the Crescendo' is an educational resource with video supplements found on YouTube designed for any current and future leaders in The Salvation Army involved in Music and Creative Arts.

'JtC' has been inspired and informed by frontline expressions of Music and Creative Arts across the United Kingdom and Ireland Territory. This comes to you from the Music and Creative Arts team.

This guide 'B' follows on from guide 'A' with specific guidance relevant to your specific discipline.

Whether you teach one-to-one or lead vocal ensembles, there is material in this document that will aid you to teach to the best of your ability. We will discuss the opportunities for **Missional priorities** or discipleship and evangelism through your tuition. **Teaching aims** and things to consider **Before you begin**. How to **Get started** and then cover some **Specifics, technical know-how** and finally some **Tips for success**.

'JtC' has been created to help enhance your ministry, to enable you and your group to experience the spiritual joy and enthusiasm that the psalmist depicts. The following six sections have been carefully considered to work in sequence so we can strive to help keep God integral to all that we do. We believe that whatever your art form, following the principles and advice that are set out in this resource will result in amazing, God-inspired work for his kingdom!

Guide 'A' is appropriate for all leaders involved within music and the arts, to help mentor future leaders or current leaders in five themes which are relevant to all.



INTRODUCTION & MISSIONAL PRIORITIES

Discipleship and Evangelism

But let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy.

Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you.'

(Psalm 5:11 NIV)

Welcome to your vocal leaders guide!

Everyone has a voice and everyone has the ability to sing, whether they believe it or not! This guide is designed to help you focus on what it means to be an effective vocal leader – from bringing out the potential in people's voices, to considering the way vocal groups can be used to enhance corporate worship.

As a Salvation Army vocal group, we are called to worship and spread God's word through song. William Booth understood the power of utilising corporate singing in worship and even encouraged the use of popular songs with alternative Christian lyrics. We continue to promote and endorse the value of worshipping through song as a way of communicating and sharing the gospel.

We want to recognise that ensemble singing can be used in many different creative ways within our ministry, both inside and outside of the traditional forms. Inclusive communal singing can be a strong outreach opportunity, and this is evident within our many community choirs, Singing By Heart groups and children's summer clubs. We would encourage anyone using singing as an outreach tool to read through this resource and reflect on their gifting in new and effective ways.





As leaders we have a responsibility to enthuse, encourage and share our passion for sung worship, which in return will energise and inspire those we work alongside. As a leader it is important to be aware and utilise the team around you. Taking a team approach to leadership will allow you to feel supported in your role. To enable everyone to fulfil their potential under our instruction, we need to understand and be able to teach best practice when it comes to the mechanics of singing.

Fundamentals in Vocal Instruction

Your body is your instrument! A singer is unique amongst musicians in that their entire body is their instrument. Just as a brass instrumentalist must hold their instrument correctly, a singer should prepare their body in a way that allows them to produce and project the best sound. Think of the body as the engine that drives a voice and the breath as the fuel that supplies the engine.

Posture

Ensure the singers in your group are stood in a relaxed manner, making sure there is no tension in the neck and shoulders; this is often indicated by the clenching of fists. As a leader, a good way to communicate best posture to your group is through demonstrating best posture yourself.

- 1. To ensure that you are standing correctly, jump and land with your feet the same distance apart as your shoulder width.
- 2. Once your feet are in the correct place, make sure the rest of the body is open and upright.

Achieve this by bending from the waist and relax as if you were a rag doll. Slowly unravel your body vertebrae until you are standing upright and facing forward.



VOCAL INSTRUCTION...

3. Stand on your tiptoes and imagine there is a piece of string coming out of the top of your head. Hold onto this string and then return to standing position keeping the top of your head attached to the imaginary string. You should instantly feel inches taller.

These exercises may feel a little strange at first. However, your group will benefit from the physicality of finding the correct posture.

Breathing

'Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.'
(Psalm 150:6 NIV)

Our breathing not only helps to support our voices, but will also help maintain healthy singing. Encourage the group to continually breathe down to their cores rather than simply filling chests and throats. This practice enables the singer to produce a quality sound and manage their breath control. As with posture, the best way to communicate this technique is by demonstrating as a leader. Use these exercises to help implement this:

- Ask the group to place their hands on their stomachs. Ask them to breathe slowly and deeply into their core, not shallowly into their lungs. As a result they should physically see and feel their hands move outwards.
- A fun demonstration of this is to ask a member of the group to lie down on the floor. Place a heavy book on their stomach and ask them to breathe in. Breathing deeply into their core will make the book rise. If they are breathing into their chest and throat there will not be as significant a movement from the book.
- Ensure the singers have a good mouth shape when breathing in. This is achieved by giving an exaggerated yawn, followed by closing the mouth keeping the back of the mouth open which the yawning position allows.

Sound

A singer's sound should be driven by supported breath. It is important not to sing from the throat, as this will limit projection and damage the vocal cords. The voice should resonate within the 'mask' of the face and bone structure.

Begin by humming in the lowest part of your range and maintaining support as you work upwards through the range to the higher notes. If you are supporting the sound from the core, you will feel a slight vibration around your face.

Range

It is important that people sing within their natural range, at the same time understanding that it is possible to extend a vocal range with exercises and regular practice and that throughout a singer's life there will be natural changes which will impact their range. As a leader it is important to continually work with individuals so the right part can be assigned to the singer according to their range.



VOCAL INSTRUCTION...

Within any singer's range there is a natural break or pivot point where the voice moves from chest to head. Encourage singers to discover where that is. Simple exercises will help people find this:

- Ask the whole ensemble to sing up the chromatic scale slowly and to put their hand up when they feel a change in their voice – their break/pivot note. This exercise allows people to discover not only where their pivot note is, but also to recognise that the pivot point is different for each singer
- Demonstrate how you want the group to sing high notes by first showing poor technique. Exaggerate the sound and what it looks like if they were to lift their chin and reach up for the note. Then repeat the same note with the sound firmly in your head voice so they can hear and see the difference. It may help to physically open your hands vertically to demonstrate how the mouth should be when singing high. This is an action you can add into your conducting to remind the group how to approach a high note when one appears in the music.
- The following exercise helps to put a lot of the above technical ideas into practice. Ask the group to sing the lyric 'Bella Signore' ('Bell-la Sin-your-ra') on a simple arpeggio. This will create the correct mouth shape on the higher notes. Encourage good breathing practice before you start, and then introduce a backward moving arm action that goes from your side all the way up to the top of your head. At the same time bend your legs and sit into the note. This will encourage the group to physically feel that the note is supported low down and the sound is rooted in the head and mask. Practise in front of the mirror first!



VOCAL INSTRUCTION...

Dictation

'Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle?' (1 Corinthians 14:8 NIV)

A vital part of singing is communication. Therefore it is essential that the listener hears and understands what we are singing about. Vocal warm-ups are a good time to strive for consistency in diction, remembering that we have a message that needs to be shared with both clarity and conviction. Here are some examples of warm-ups:

The tip of the tongue

'The tip of the tongue, the teeth and the lips will make every word as clear as can be. The tip of the tongue, the teeth and the lips are working together as you can see.'

Speak it slowly at first, exaggerating the percussive, hard consonants. Repeat as fast as possible making sure that every word can be heard clearly. Finally, add notes making sure the consonants and full vowels are clear.

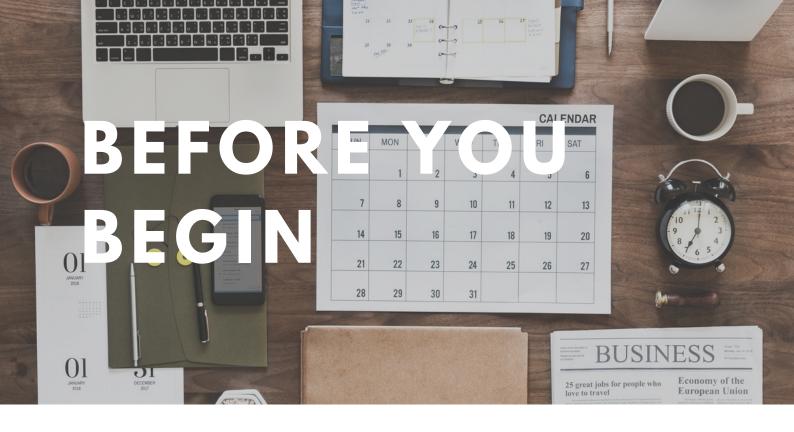
Papa's got a head like a ping pong ball

A popular and fun diction-based warm-up that children really enjoy. This is sung to the melody of the last section of Rossini's William Telloverture.

'Papa's got a head like a ping pong ball,
Papa's got a head like a ping pong ball,
Papa's got a head like a ping pong ball,
Like a ping, like a ping pong ball.
Papa's got a head like a ping pong ping pong ping pong ball,
Papa's got a head like a ping pong ping pong ball,
Ping, ping, ping, ping, ping, ping, ping, pong

For added fun and to increase concentration, split the group into two, asking one half to sing each 'ping' and half to sing each 'pong'.





Please remember that this guide is designed for leaders to read and digest this information, then to interpret in your own unique way, it is not a step by step guide to leading a vocal ensemble but rather an informative supplement to singing in general.

Safeguarding

There is so much to consider within the life of a modern-day church in how to interact with those in our care. If your pupil(s) is under the age of 18 then you can use **Safe and Sound** training, this is essential from a legislative point of view for everyone engaging with young people. Make sure that you speak to relevant people regarding any additional needs of your pupils, as this may affect the way in which you teach and communicate. A **DBS** check will also be needed for each volunteer. Contact your DHQ for these details and ensure both of these important steps are taken.

From there, here are a set of positive guidelines that will create a safe and positive environment with a clear Christian ethos.





Working with Vocal Ensembles

"...speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord."

(Ephesians 5:19 NIV)

Take a team approach to leadership by including others in decision making.....

Be aware of this and relish the diversity, always seeking to include others in decision making and utilising the support of your team and group. A singing group can provide a really good opportunity to engage and involve all types of people in the life of a corps. By belonging to a group they are given a place in the church and a responsibility of their own.

Helpful hints for working with adult vocal groups:

Perhaps you can create opportunities such as community choirs or 'Come and Sing' events which will enable more members of the church and community to be a part of a vocal group.

Helpful hints for working with children's vocal groups:

Why not create singing opportunities for children outside the traditional singing company? Perhaps consider an after-school children's choir or holiday club group. What about creating opportunities such as children's caroling group at Christmas, singing carols at local care homes?

Vocal groups flourish when there is an atmosphere of mutual respect. We want to create a safe environment where our members feel valued, can flourish and are able to try new ideas.

Helpful hints for working with children's vocal groups:

It can often be the case that children's singing groups can be used as a training ground for new vocal leaders. It is always a good idea to encourage young people who show promise to develop these skills. Be sure to carefully nurture potential leaders on both a practical and spiritual basis.



Here are some best practices for your rehearsals:

Structure

Time management is really important during rehearsals. Keep one eye on the clock in order to cover everything that is needed in the allocated time. Starting on time will help this. Think about the rehearsal as a whole and how to use your time wisely. Ensure that the key elements such as warm-ups are covered. Set a good pace to the rehearsal, one that suits your leadership style and the needs of those around you. A faster-paced rehearsal often has lots of energy and can fly by, but can be more tiring for all and difficult to sustain.

Helpful hints for working with children's vocal groups:

Try to get a balance to your rehearsal. Older children will want a fast-paced rehearsal, but younger children may get lost at a faster pace. Perhaps try using some of the older children to help the younger ones with their reading and staying engaged.

It is important to understand that in a vocal group there might be members who are unable to read music well, if at all. Newer and inexperienced members of the group may need explanations of how to follow the music especially in terms of song structure. It may be that you reserve time in your rehearsals for this, or look to find additional time to support those members who need assistance. Find ways to enable all in the group to fulfil their potential regardless of ability.

Helpful hints for working with children's vocal groups:

Don't neglect explaining the theory of music when leading children. It may take time but it is an invaluable gift that children will grow from.

It is important that you reserve enough quality time for the spiritual growth of the group. It doesn't always have to be at the end of a rehearsal. It can help to give understanding to a particular song or teaching before you begin on new material. Work towards involving everyone in this.

Repertoire

'Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day.' (Psalm 96: 1-2 NIV)

Choosing suitable songs for the group is essential for leading any ensemble, and varying the style of songs is also important both for the group and those who listen. Ensure they include songs that are easy to learn right through to songs that challenge and stretch the group. Many choirs or soloists are capable of so much more than either you or they thought possible. It is also important to learn to be flexible during a rehearsal. It may be better to elect to cover fewer songs but in more detail, rather than gloss over a larger quantity. If a song needs more time, then allow that time; However, you may have to sacrifice another song that was on your rehearsal schedule.

Choosing repertoire can sometimes be dependent on the accompanist. Try and introduce a song in good time to allow them to prepare and experiment with a new style. If using an accompanist, be sure that they have had sufficient time to prepare the music. There are often backing tracks which can be used if no pianist is available.

Helpful hints for working with adult vocal groups:

If you have a limited number of men, you could choose a Soprano, Alto, Baritone (SAB) arrangement or adapt a SATB arrangement, ensuring that the men have a baritone line rather than a tenor line.

If you are preparing songs for Sunday worship and are able to know in advance what the themes will be, try to choose music which will complement the theme.

It is important that our groups understand and communicate the message of each song they sing. Where possible, encourage your group to memorise the music. Some groups can be uncomfortable with this for a variety of reasons, but there are wonderful benefits from it. It can enable the singers to communicate with the listeners more freely, allowing them to maintain greater focus on the leader and help them to focus on the meaning of the lyrics.

Another way which can help the listener to connect with the meaning of a song is to introduce it before singing. You may well find the listener and group themselves find it easier to connect with the message if one of the group is able to articulate what the song means to them, or the message they understand from its lyrics.

Maybe consider using repertoire that allows collaboration with other sections within the corps.

Blending Voices

"...so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others." (Romans 12:5 NIV)

It is definitely worth taking time in rehearsals to work on the sound and tonal colour of the group. When doing this, refer back to warm-up exercises that you have used and include references to technique that will help with this. Blending is an essential part of the overall tonal quality of a group which requires every member of the group to sing as one. Talking about singing as part of a group rather than as a group of soloists is also something that can help improve the sound. Look to guide the choir to sing as sections balancing each part.



Helpful hints for working with adult vocal groups:

Sometimes in a vocal group there may be one or two members with trained voices who can overpower others. It is best to deal with this sensitively, balancing the requests for those singers to blend more and maybe using them as soloists on other occasions. It may also be appropriate to give the more experienced and capable singers the less experienced members of the group to take under their wings.

Helpful hints for working with children vocal groups:

Inclusivity is an important part of Salvation Army music-making and it may be that some of the children in your ensemble struggle with pitching. Some children naturally have a very limited range which can mean they sing below the note, often known as 'growling'. To help prevent this, place children who have difficulty pitching between confident singers, as they will be positively influenced by the sound around them.

Sometimes our groups have a disproportionate split between men and women or boys and girls. Make sure there is a good balance between the parts, and that the melody can be clearly heard at all times. This may impact on your seating pattern; don't be afraid to experiment until you find something that works for your group.

The most popular seating arrangement tends to be soprano, alto, tenor, bass from left to right, with strongest and highest voices at the back or on the end of the row in adult groups; and soprano, middle, alto in children's groups.

Helpful hints for leaders of all vocal groups:

Try various seating plans in rehearsals or for certain songs to find what suits best and so that people don't get too comfortable in their own seat! Mixing it up will change the sound significantly which will prove beneficial for the singers' adaptability.

Helpful hints for working with adult vocal groups:

Try alternating male and female parts. This will encourage members of the choir to learn to hold their part so they are not too reliant on others around them. It also encourages them to listen to the parts around them and how their part fits into the overall harmonic structure.

Singing around the space can also help to strengthen the harmonies. Equally importantly, singing in this type of formation can provide a different experience for the audience and help them feel included and involved in the sound of the group. When doing this it is important to make sure that all parts are confident, as every individual will be heard by a member of the congregation.



Teaching a new song

Learning a new song can be daunting for both the leader and the group, but approaching it with excitement and positivity will mean that the choir will respond to your leadership. Sometimes as leaders we feel that we have to learn the whole song at once. However, it may be best to introduce a new song over a number of rehearsals. When learning a new song we could begin with the chorus or the main hook of the song. If it is a rhythmically complicated song, perhaps speak or clap the rhythm in the first instance. A lyrically complex song may benefit by being sung to 'la' and then adding the lyrics.

It is a good idea to introduce the new song in the early stages of the rehearsal when the group are warmed up and well-focused. Try starting it after you have sung something that they are familiar with so they are feeling confident as a group.

Try and revisit the song later in the rehearsal to help memorisation.

Helpful hints for working with children vocal groups:

Often the most immediate way to teach a song is to teach by rote. This often lends itself easier to certain styles of music such as 'gospel'. Try not to use this as the only way of teaching new songs, since a developing understanding of how to read music is an important skill to teach.

Consider the fact that when learning a new song some members would appreciate a recording that would demonstrate the new material. This may save time in the long run as it will give the group a chance to practise between rehearsals.

It can be tempting to rush teaching a song so that it can be sung out. However, it is always best to ensure you are fully prepared before it reaches listeners. A good start, clear transitions and a confident finish are always essential.

Be Creative

'Whatever you do, work at it with all of your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.' (Colossians 3:23 NIV)

There will often be the opportunity for the choir to do something a little bit different with the songs they have learnt, maybe to offer variety during a concert or to enhance a theme during worship. These can include:

- Using soloists.
- Movement or choreography. If using movement, always allow enough time for the group to learn the actions. Some members of the group may need longer than others to get the hang of it. For some it may be too far out of their comfort zone and you may need to select just a few members to do the actions. As well as adding energy and often smiles to the song, well planned actions can often promote the understanding of the lyrics.
- Signing. Using British Sign Language or Makaton has become a popular way to creatively enhance a song.



- Visual presentations can further help to enhance the message of a song. You could ask a member of the group to create a multimedia presentation for particular songs, or even use this as a way to include other members of the church who are not a regular part of the group.
- Drama. If your group is preparing an entire concert, then a drama sketch is often a good way to link songs that have a common theme. It gives the concert variety and choir members a bit of a rest.

Helpful hints for leaders of all vocal groups:

If you are able to work collaboratively with meeting leaders, it may be possible to utilise the vocal group in leading a prayer time.

Conducting A Vocal Ensemble

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of others.'

(Philippians 2:3-4)

Please refer to the Basic Conducting Guideline if you are starting your journey as a vocal leader. This will be a useful tool to all who are new to leading a group. Take the time to practise these basic beat patterns; the greater your comfort level with the fundamentals, the more expressive you can be in your direction.

There are certain characteristics which are specific to leading a vocal ensemble and are worth mentioning here:

- When conducting a vocal group you can often conduct the line and its phrasing or rhythm rather than having to purely beat time.
- Your group will reflect your level of enthusiasm. You are the constant example for your group, whether that is displaying energy or portraying the emotiveness of a song. This usually means you have to leave your own comfort zone.
- Try to mirror what you would like from the group. Breathe and move with your group, conducting in the same sympathetic style you wish them to sing in. Eye contact is essential to keeping good connectivity and communication.
- If the group are singing without music, it is important that words, cues and gestures are given in plenty of time allowing your singers to react. Your directions should also be consistent in singing out to what you've been doing in rehearsal.
- Always make sure that cut-offs and pickups are clear; this will also assist with a clear start or end to a word and phrase.

Helpful hints for working with children vocal groups:

When working with children and less experienced musicians, you may need to maintain a clear beat pattern, more so than working with an experienced group.

Helpful hints for working with all vocal groups:

Clear and consistent direction will give your group confidence and assure they are able to sing to their full potential.

WHAT NEXT?



RESOURCES

Sing to the Lord is a Salvation Army publication and contains songs which adhere lyrically to the beliefs and theology of The Salvation Army. This journal comes with a demonstration and backing track.

Sing to the Lord Children's Voices is a resource for Salvation Army children's vocal groups. It includes related Bible teaching as well as choreography. Each song comes with a demonstration and backing track.

Take time to discover other religious music publications. There are lots of options for church music online. Do not be afraid to occasionally use appropriate secular songs, as long as you are able to explain the message or your interpretation of the lyrics and be sure to be aware of copyright implications.

Please find below a list of publications that you may find useful for both finding new and relevant repertoire and also if you want more information on leading a vocal group.

COMMUNITY VOICES – Music and Creative Arts publication

A guide to establishing and developing a community choir.

LET THEM SING – Muriel Yendel (Salvation Army publication)

VOCAL PRODUCTION, TRAINING and WARM UPS

There are many good resources for preparing the voice online. Here are a few examples:

For warming and opening up the voice https://www.youtube.com/watch? v=Q5hS7eukUbQ

https://sing.trinitycollege.co.uk

Whether using vocal exercises to prepare for a singing exam, or as part of your day-to-day teaching, these new resources provide ideas for using them with your students.

Training your Choir (previously called Giving Voice) – Handbook for Choir Directors and Trainers

By David Hill, Hilary Parfitt and Elizabeth Ash For traditional choral training

The Contemporary Singer by Anne Peckham



WHAT NEXT?...

Vocal Warm Up Exercises

Devised and demonstrated by Deborah Miles-Johnson of the BBC Singers CDs available from Choraline

Doo-be-doo Pop Collection of Vocal Warm-Ups www.writersofnote.co.uk

Following hot on the heels of the success of The Chicken Tikka *Collection* and The Um-Pah *Collection*, this is the latest selection of 10 fun vocal exercises on CD for children – although adults do seem to like them also.

CONDUCTING TECHNIQUE

www.tetonmusic.com/how-to-conduct.htm

Free conducting lessons including:

The conducting window; simple meters; less common meters; gesture of preparation; Ictus; gestures of syncopation; baton or no baton; conducting with expression; conducting articulations; cutoffs.

REPERTOIRE

Out of the Ark

If you're looking for music for children, then look no further! Out of the Ark Music is home to the very best singing resources for primary school and nurseries age. Their extensive range of songbooks all come with audio CDs and many of our titles also have Words on Screen™ software – ideal for rehearsals or performances.'

SingUp.org

Songs, resources and ideas to make singingpart of every child's learning.

Kevin Mayhew

A Christian Publisher whose resources are used across the church globally.

One final helpful hint

Success is all in the preparation. Know your music, know your group and know what you want to achieve, whilst all the time putting to the fore the main reason why you're doing this.

Singing is a powerful ministry, an offering to God all he is due.

'Choral musicis not one of life's frills. It's something that goes to the very heart of our humanity, our sense of community, and our souls. You express, when you sing, your soul in song. And when you get together with a group of other singers, it becomes more than the sum of the parts.'

(John Rutter from The Importance of Choir)





We pray that this resource has been helpful to you in your ministry. If you would like to know more about any of the different subjects included here, why not contact one of the Music and Creative Arts team.

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