

SIMPLE WAYS TO
BOOST YOUR
BRAIN



GARY KENT



The Incredible
Journey

SIMPLE WAYS TO BOOST YOUR BRAIN

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The brain is your greatest asset. Learn to use it by design to help you stay happier, healthier, and more successful for longer—the only entity that will be with you for your entire life!

—Arlene R. Taylor, PhD

SIMPLE WAYS TO BOOST YOUR BRAIN

INTRODUCTION

The human brain is an incredible masterpiece of design. Its capabilities and potential are only just beginning to be understood by some of the greatest minds in the world. It is well-known that the brain accepts a flood of information about the world around you through your five senses – sight, sound, taste, touch and smell. The brain uses complex processes to interpret this information, which enables you to live and enjoy life. However, much brain activity goes on without our even being conscious of it. For instance, centres controlling breathing, heart rate and body temperature are found in the

brain, and are vital to human wellbeing. Besides these amazing and essential functions, the human brain is capable of activity that is unique in this world to humans. The human brain is capable of experiencing emotion, generating the expression of feeling and processing and adopting beliefs. And all of this occurs within an organ the size of two fists!

At this point, your brain may be overflowing with questions. How is the human brain constructed? What does it look like? Where did it come from? What is it capable of? In this booklet, we will explore these questions, and more! We will unlock key secrets to help you understand the power of the mind, and discover how you can develop your true, hidden potential through harnessing the power of the brain!

BRAIN BASICS

The adult human brain is approximately the size of a person's two fists, held together with the thumbs parallel. It contains about 120 billion neurons, which communicate via branch-like dendrites through electrical signals that travel at speeds of up to 150 metres per second. The brain's memory capacity is about a quadrillion bytes, the same amount of space needed to store the information in the entire internet. At birth, a human brain weighs about 400 grams; by adulthood, it weighs about 1.3kg, with the male brain often weighing just slightly more. However, please note that the physical size of a person's brain is not directly related to that individual's intelligence!

The brain is the last organ in the body to mature. It goes through more changes than any other organ. The neurons, or nerve cells, of the brain are unique, in that they do not divide and

multiply to create new cells, as happens in other body organs. What this means is that you have the same neurons today, as when you were a child. That's one reason it's so important to take care of your brain neurons: they are not regularly replaced as are other body cells.

All brains are believed to be the same color regardless of a person's skin color. If you were to put a grey glove on your left hand and a white glove on your right hand, that would approximately represent the color of your brain. The left hemisphere is a pinkish grey, and the right hemisphere is a pinkish white. The right hemisphere is lighter in color because it contains more long axons wrapped in myelin, a white insulating material that allows for messages to fly around the neuron pathways at even faster speeds, sometimes up to 966km per hour.

The brain can be described in terms of three “layers”, each of which performs a range of related functions. The deepest layer controls basic subconscious functions, such as heart rate, breathing, blood pressure, and the nerve pathways for routine skills. The centre for the stress response, also known as “fight-or-flight”, is located here. It is where subconscious decisions are made. This part of the brain may continue to function even when other parts of the brain have stopped. This area registers awareness of the present, receives data from the senses, tends to be focused on self-preservation, and can become dominant when a person feels threatened, anxious, stressed or worried.

The second layer of the brain also controls many subconscious activities. It directs the immune system, and is where emotional centres are located. It is aware of both past and present, is

aware of the impact of its actions on others, and acts with lightning speed. When uncontrolled by the higher brain powers in the neocortex (briefly described below), these feelings coupled with its speed, can send a person spiraling rapidly downwards, into states of phobia, crimes of passion, and addictive behaviours.

The neocortex, the pre-frontal cortex directly behind a person's forehead, is the portion of the brain that has conscious thought. This is the location where executive faculties such as the willpower and conscience are located. The neocortex registers awareness of the past, the present and the future. The neocortex enables human beings to plan, set goals, focus attention, and manage emotions. On a lighter note, the faculty for humour is also found here!

THE ORIGIN OF THE BRAIN

The human brain is truly incredible, far more complex than any computer could ever be. As David, a king who lived in Bible times, thought about the wonders of the human body, he exclaimed, "*I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made*" (Psalm 139:14). In this verse, King David recognised that humans are not the result of blind chance or haphazard construction. Human beings have been incredibly designed, by an incredible Designer. The first verse of the Bible tells us the origin of everything in our world:

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1).

Genesis Chapter One then goes on to list what God created on each day in the literal creation week. Light; atmosphere; land, sea, and plants; sun and moon; fish and birds; and animals. As God completed each of these wonders, He pronounced it good. When

first created, everything that God had made showed what He is like (Romans 1:20; Psalm 19:1).

Finally, on the sixth day, God said,

"Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness'...So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:26,27).

God created human beings, both male and female, to be like Him in a special way. The human brain, with its ability for complex, creative and abstract thought, makes human beings unique from other creatures that God has made. Does that give us the right to abuse other things for our own benefit? Far from it! While God has given human beings the capacity to manage His creation (Genesis 1:28), with this capacity comes responsibility, to care for the amazing works of God's creation

in ways that honour Him and reflect His character. That is part of being made in God's image: this includes being like Him in character. God is love (1 John 4:8,16), He manages everything in love, and His plan is for human beings to do the same.

There is another point to be brought out of David's psalm of praise about the wonders of the human body. God did not just create human beings in the beginning of this world's history, and then leave us to ourselves. God loves us and He is intimately involved in our lives today. David also wrote,

"For You formed my inward parts; You covered me (or, wove me together) in my mother's womb" (Psalm 139:14).

Only God can create life. Each new baby that is born, is a sign that God is still working in our world today (see also Nehemiah 9:6; Hebrews 1:1-3). This also means that every individual is

unique. You are unique. You are not just a factory production. You have been custom made by God, and He loves and values you. He loves you so much, He gave His only Son to die for you (John 3:16). He wants to spend eternity with you, in the amazing new earth that He is creating for all those who love Him and choose to live His way, the way of true love (Revelation 21; 22; 1 Corinthians 13; John 14:1-3).

The Bible tells us that God wrote His holy law, the Ten Commandments, on stone, and gave this to Moses. But did you know, that God also has laws that govern your body, including your mind? Read this amazing verse:

"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Hebrews 8:10).

In this we see, that God wants to write His laws into our minds! That means God wants to transform my brain, and yours! Maybe you feel like your life has been a failure. Or maybe you feel like you have achieved some things, but want to achieve more. Would you like God to re-write your brain? If you answered, "Yes!", then the promise in Hebrews 8:10 is for you!

If you would like to follow God's plan, you can cooperate with Him more easily by understanding how the brain works. Learning about brain function and how to take good care of the brain and the body that houses it, can help us stay healthier and younger for longer. That means we will enjoy life more, and be able to serve God better, and do more for others. All that is what God wants for us (John 10:10). Keeping in mind this purpose, let's look at the functions of the brain in more detail.

FOUR BRAIN DIVISIONS

Before, we identified the three layers of the brain. The neocortex is the most significant of these, as it is the centre for willpower, choice and other unique functions. Let's focus on it now.

The neocortex is divided into two hemispheres, which in turn are each divided in half, forming four divisions. These four divisions were named by the Greek physician, Hippocrates, as Choleric, Phlegmatic, Melancholic, and Sanguine. Several bridges connect the two hemispheres so they can communicate with each other, the corpus callosum being the largest.

Broca's area in the frontal left lobe is named after a French physician, Pierre Paul Broca, who discovered the function of this area while examining the brains of individuals with language difficulties. His research shows that the brains of patients suffering from aphasia,

the impaired ability to communicate after a brain injury, contained lesions in a portion of the left frontal region of the brain. This section of the brain responsible for speech was named Broca in honour of his research.

It would be easy to assume that the brain functions like a computer, but in fact, the human brain is far more than just a computer! While computers remain very sophisticated calculators that can accomplish some very fast calculations, there are some things that they cannot do. For instance, they cannot adapt and perform tasks outside their initial programming; or come to conclusions based on general observations; or create poems, works of fiction, or artistic endeavors that are rich with emotion. The greatest human inventions cannot equal the wonder of God's handiwork in the brain.

Although every brain differs slightly, the general consensus is, that while 80%

of the brain likely develops by the age of three, brain maturation is something else again. Studies suggest that the brain's pre-frontal cortex may not mature until the late twenties, and for some brains perhaps not until the early thirties. In addition, it may take up to 1.6 years longer for a male systemising brain to mature as compared with a female empathising brain.

Every individual human is believed to have at least one brain aptitude, talent, innate giftedness, preference, dominance, calling, lead, or energy advantage. This brain aptitude is innate and may be identified, developed, and honed. If it isn't used, it can remain unidentified and largely unused.

Each brain on planet Earth is as unique as its owner's fingerprints. Brain aptitude is one way to describe the type of brain a person possesses. Aptitude does this in terms of a person's natural attentiveness to certain topics, the way

in which that person's brain processes specific types of information, how the brain manages data, and the type of information by which the brain is most easily energised.

American psychologist, Dr. Richard Haier, has used Positron Emission Tomography (PET) scans to show that the brain expends less energy—this is, it requires less oxygen and glucose—when it is using functions that align with its innate aptitude.

Although all parts of the brain work all the time, one cerebral division tends to take the lead when the specific task primarily uses the functions housed within that division. Neurochemically, when you think using primarily your brain's best aptitude, the following things tend to happen:

- there is a reduced resistance to transmission of information across the synapse,

- there may be more rapid exchange of data between neurons along neuron pathways, and
- processes tend to require lower levels of energy expenditures.

For example, let's say that you have a right-hand preference and expend less energy doing tasks that utilise your right hand (e.g., pounding nails, using a utensil to eat, throwing a ball). Now imagine that you break your right arm and it is placed in a cast that you must wear for 6-8 weeks. You can learn to do many of the tasks your right hand used to handle by using your left hand. At first it may be extremely awkward. With practice however, you learn to do several very well, although you may always be aware at some level that it doesn't "seem as natural".

When the cast is removed, you tend to revert almost automatically to using your right arm. There is often a

sense of relief, a comfort level, and the realisation that this is easier and takes less energy, although you still maintain some sense of developed competence with the opposite hand.

THE BRAIN BENT PYRAMID

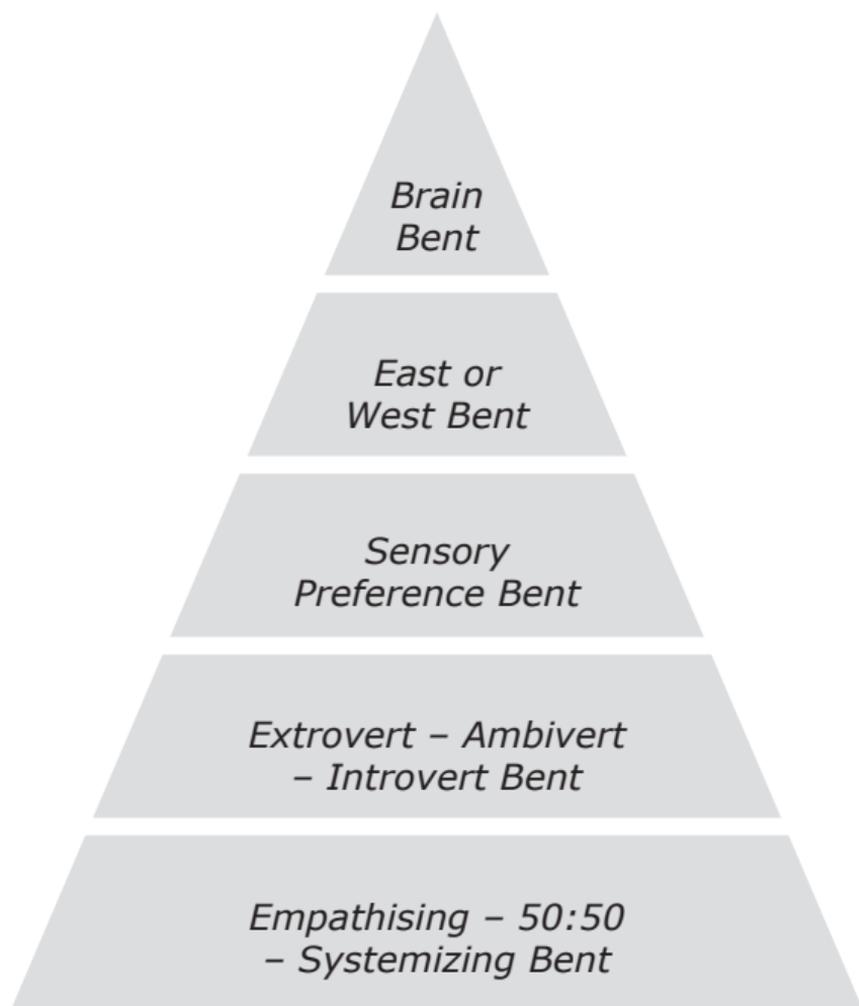
Let's look at the Brain Bent Pyramid. This is a pictorial representation of five key types of brain function.

If you can identify how each relates to your brain, you may be able to better manage your brain's energy—by design.

The foundational first layer refers to whether your brain is primarily systemising (typically associated with the male brain) or primarily empathising (typically associated with the female brain) or a 50:50 blend of both.

The second layer from the bottom refers to the type of environment in which your brain functions most energy-efficiently: one that offers relatively high levels of

stimulation (extrovert), moderate levels (ambivert), or low levels (introvert).



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The Brain Bent Pyramid

The third layer refers to sensory preference, defined as the type of sensory stimuli that registers most quickly and intensely in your brain: visual, auditory, or kinesthetic. Sensory preference impacts the way you take in and process new information most easily and the way in which you tend to interact with others.

The next layer up refers to whether your brain was born and raised in eastern or western regions of this planet. Potential brain differences based on the culture of a person's birth is a topic studied in the field of cultural neuroscience.

The top layer of the pyramid refers to your brain bent, also known as the dominance of the brain. It impacts the way you pay attention and manage the data that is processed in the brain.

Human beings use all of the brain all of the time; however, as we noted above, brain scans have shown that

executive functions are located in the frontal lobes, especially the pre-frontal cortex right behind the forehead. These functions, including consciousness, can be thought of as being at the top of the pyramid because they guide and direct everything else.

Brain scans suggest that a portion of your unique brain appears to have an energy advantage over other parts of your brain. This means that you can do some tasks more easily and energy-efficiently than others. The brain knows what is energy-efficient for it and naturally prefers to do those energy-efficient tasks. It tends to procrastinate on doing other things. Figure this out and you will know more about your brain's natural aptitude and how to use your brain by design.

The brain does not store oxygen or glucose. It depends on the blood stream to continually bring fresh supplies. Constant energy consumption

is required to think-pure and simple. Since no one can do everything in life, identifying your brain's energy advantage and endeavoring to match the majority of your tasks to that advantage can help you gain higher levels of competency, likely improve your health, and perhaps extend your longevity.

Everyone has learned to do some tasks well. The question is whether or not those tasks are energy-efficient for your brain. You begin to figure this out by asking yourself the following questions:

- What tasks do I procrastinate? Also, what tasks would I procrastinate, if I thought I could get away with it?
- How tired am I at the end of a specific task? Am I more tired at the end of those tasks I tend to procrastinate?
- How often do I make mistakes when doing tasks I dislike?

In all likelihood, you will begin to see patterns emerging of the tasks you naturally enjoy, and those which you tend to dislike. Usually, it is the tasks you enjoy that the brain can do more energy-efficiently. On the other hand, those that seem to really drain your energy are likely to be tasks in which you don't have a natural aptitude.

As mentioned, the neocortex or third brain layer is divided into four chunks of cerebral tissue. Most brains are believed to have an energy advantage in one of those four chunks. And there is believed to be some physiology associated with your innate energy advantage. Brain bent involves a reduced resistance to the transmission of information across the synapse or synaptic gap between neurons. When doing a task that does not primarily utilise your brain bent, your brain tends to:

- require more glucose
- need more oxygen
- become fatigued more quickly
- think less quickly
- get irritable as it becomes exhausted

It is true that the brain can adapt and learn to do tasks for which it has little innate aptitude. While it is good to develop a range of abilities, spending large amounts of time doing tasks to which you are not naturally suited can become stressful. And prolonged stress can lead to illness. Let's briefly consider how the brain deals with anger, worry, anxiety, or fear.

DOWNSHIFTING

A natural brain phenomenon that kicks in automatically when the brain feels unsafe is called downshifting. Metaphorically, compare the three functional layers of the brain with gears in an automatic transmission.

In the face of anger or fear—including worry and anxiety—the brain directs its energy and attention to the lower brain layers, searching for functions to help it feel safer. How far the brain downshifts (either to second gear or clear down to 1st gear), plus when and if it upshifts, depends on the degree of threat that brain perceives. Downshifting interferes with easy access to the third layer of conscious cognitive functions noted above.

Although both boys and girls can develop anxiety when parents argue or divorce, or when they are found in another stressful or fearful situation, studies suggest that a boy's brain may be at higher risk for downshifting. This can derail communication and learning both at home and at school and in the community. In some extreme cases, it can take several years before the boy's brain returns to learning readiness and higher order thinking.

Downshifting on a regular basis has potential to lead to long-term stress, and may in the long run really wear down your health. However, when you know your brain bent, this allows you to hone your natural aptitude to achieve your best success.

HOW TO USE YOUR BRAIN BENT

Having the knowledge of what is your brain's natural aptitude is powerful. Use the following as a checklist to find out your natural aptitude. You may like to rate yourself on each ability on a scale of 1-10, with 1 being the lowest, and 10 the highest. Follow the prompts beneath each checklist, to find out your average for each of the four divisions. Then we will look at how to use your results to achieve your best success.

1. Left Frontal Lobe: Prioritising Division

Rate your ability to do the following on a scale of 1 (very poor) to 10 (excellent):

- Make decisions easily and/or delegate
- Set goals
- Prioritise the best options
- Be objective/single-minded in pursuing goals
- Achieve social and organisational power by managing time and money effectively
- Re-imagine and analyse data
- Utilise tools of every type
- Research and solve problems using available data
- Speak audibly and laugh aloud
- Develop and use conscience

- Manage willpower
- Understand numbers and signs
- Register and identify the emotion of joy

Your total score: _____

Divide the total by 13 to work out your average for the prioritising division:

Total divided by 13 = _____

2. Right Frontal Lobe: Envisioning Division

Rate your ability to:

- Anticipate and make changes
- Absorb the big picture
- Scan for trends, patterns, global perspective
- Daydream, imagine
- Innovate - travel, write, compose, design (entrepreneurial activities if extroverted, artistic activities if introverted)

- Compute context
- Gesture expressively and expansively
- Be spontaneous (i.e., you dislike routine)
- Appreciate, develop, and use a sense of humour
- 3-D internal mental imaging
- Risk doing something in a new way
- Think in pictures and symbols
- Register and identify the protective emotions (e.g., anger, fear, sadness)

Your total score: _____

Divide the total by 13 to work out your average for the envisioning division:

Total divided by 13 = _____

3. Maintaining Division

Rate your ability to:

- Develop habits dependably
- Be sequential, practical, and predictable
- Honour and maintain traditions
- Learn the rules and follow them
- Repeat routines/procedures accurately
- File and track data, labels, details, objects
- Develop skills for reading, writing, spelling
- Utilise fine motor skills for grasping and manipulating bounded shapes, for data entry, word processing, and typing.
- Store and track non-emotional memories

- Develop complex rhythmical skills (music, data entry, typing, marching)
- Maintain the status quo

Your total score: _____

Divide the total by 11 to work out your average for the maintaining division:

Total divided by 11 = _____

4. Harmonising Division

Rate your ability to:

- Promote relatedness, connectedness, and harmony among sounds, colours, bounded shapes, and the environment.
- Be sentimental
- Enjoy nature
- Celebrate everything (e.g., holidays, anniversaries, deaths, national events)
- Enjoy potlucks

- Pursue relational and collegial connectedness
- Take in information via touch (hugs)
- Sing and play musical instruments by ear (native musical ability)
- Entertain, act, dance, sing, cook, teach
- Process spiritual experiences, counsel
- Read nonverbal body language
- Recognise faces, store emotional memories

Your total score: _____

Divide the total by 12 to work out your average for the harmonising division:

Total divided by 12 = _____

Rank the divisions from highest to lowest average score

Division 1: _____

Division 2: _____

Division 3: _____

Division 4: _____

You may also like to do this activity with a friend, where you rate each other on your abilities. Sometimes other people can see strengths and weaknesses in us, that we may not be aware of.

When you have rated your abilities, and worked out your natural strengths and weaknesses, you can use this information to focus on your strengths. You may like to develop certain weak points you have identified, especially if you can see that these are really affecting your performance in everyday life. However, don't spend all your time and energy worrying over these. Instead, "overcome evil with good" by spending most of your time working

on your strengths. By developing your bent, you can beat discouragement by achieving success in your natural aptitudes.

Also, don't use the above information to avoid things that you just don't like. No matter what role you have in life, whether at home, in your career, or in relationships, there will always be some things that are fun to do, while others are less so. Develop a strategy, for how to tackle the tasks you struggle with. For instance, some people like to do their least favourite tasks early in the day, to get them out of the way so that they can relax (comparatively!) later on. Dividing up the tasks you have to do for the day into twenty-minute blocks, with a short break in between each task, is also a great way to work. If you are struggling through a task that you can sense is draining your brain energy, take a break from it by doing a natural aptitude task, then come back to the

challenging task later when you have a bit more energy.

12 SIMPLE WAYS TO GIVE YOUR BRAIN A BOOST

In addition to focusing your time and attention on your strengths, here are some basic brain health tips that apply to everyone, no matter what your bent may be:

1. Stay physically active - do 20-30 minutes of aerobic exercise every day.
2. Extend your knowledge by listening to and discussing informative podcasts or TED talks on varying topics.
3. Engage in stimulating conversation about new ideas and projects.
4. Keep up skills you have learned in the past.
5. Take online courses to keep learning new skills.

6. Practice a hobby or some artistic activity that your brain enjoys, using all your senses.
7. Take some quiet time to think
8. Get enough sleep
9. Eat a healthy diet
10. Avoid tobacco
11. Have a good social network and connections, both family and friends.
12. Think about how you can grow your faith and trust in God

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

As we noted above, life here on earth is a preparation for a new life in a better world. The only thing you can take from this world to the next, is your character. By developing your brain power to its highest, you can show those around you God's love in the here and now, and be preparing to live in that wonderful place God has in store for you. That is what God wants for you.

If you would like to experience life God's way, why not say a simple prayer like this right now, to ask for His help:

"Dear God, Thank You for creating me in such a wonderful, unique way. I believe that You have a special purpose for my life. I want to live in harmony with Your plan. Please transform my mind, as You have promised in Hebrews 8:10. Please make me loving, like You. In Jesus' name, Amen."

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The information in this booklet is of a general nature, and is intended for educational purposes only. It is not intended to be used as a substitute for seeking personalised care from a psychologist or other medical professional. Readers are encouraged to do their own research and form their own conclusions about the information presented.

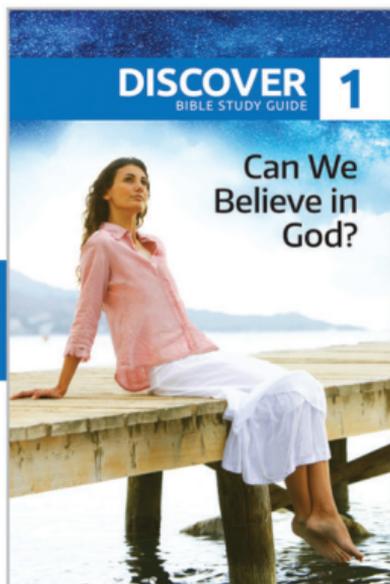
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The human brain is an incredible masterpiece of design. Its capabilities and potential are only just beginning to be understood by some of the greatest minds in the world. It is well-known that the brain accepts a flood of information about the world around you through your five senses – sight, sound, taste, touch and smell. The brain uses complex processes to interpret this information, which enables you to live and enjoy life.



The Incredible Journey



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