



THE  
JAPAN  
SOCIETY


# Tanabata 七夕



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## Tanabata Festival



**The Tanabata Festival in Japan celebrates an old love story** about a weaver princess and a cow herder. In the story, they are allowed to meet only once a year, on July 7th, so many people celebrate their reunion on this day. The two characters in the story represent two stars in the Milky Way so Tanabata is also called the **'Star Festival'**.

### Tanabata Story

Orihime and Hikoboshi both live in the Milky Way. Orihime is a weaver who makes beautiful clothes for her father Tentei, Emperor of the Heavens, and Hikoboshi is a cow herder. They meet and fall deeply in love. However they spend so much time together that they start to neglect their work; the cows become sick and Orihime no longer makes any clothes.

Tentei tries to solve the problem by splitting them up and sends them to separate sides of the Milky Way River. However, Orihime and Hikoboshi are so upset that they still don't do any work. So Tentei decides that they should be allowed to meet one day each year, on July 7th. However, it is said that if it rains the couple must wait another year to meet.

**Do you think the story has a happy ending?  
Why?**

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#### Pronunciation

Tanabata: tah-nah-bah-tah

Orihime: or-ree-he-may

Hikoboshi: he-co-bosh-ee

Tentei: tent-ay

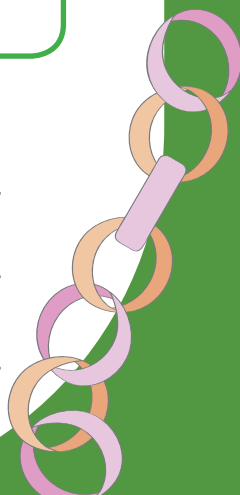
Tanzaku: tan-zack-oo

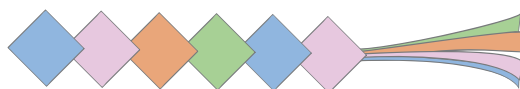
**If you were Tentei, what would you do?**

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## Fukinagashi Decorations

The Tanabata festival is famous for large and colourful decorations which are hung up in town centres and shopping areas. One of the most common decorations is called fukinagashi. These are long streamers which represent the threads of yarn Orihime uses to weave beautiful clothes.



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## Yukata

Lots of people enjoy dressing up in summer kimono called yukata to attend tanabata celebrations and other summer festivals. Just like normal kimono, yukata come in many different designs and can be worn by anyone, but are more casual. Yukata are normally worn with a type of sandal called geta.



## Soumen Noodles

There is no particular food associated with the Tanabata Festival. However, because Tanabata takes place in the summer when the weather is very hot, cold noodle dishes are often eaten around this time.

One popular summer dish is somen. Somen are very thin white noodles made from wheat and are served cold with a savoury dipping sauce. Sometimes somen are served in a special way called Nagashi Somen which means “flowing noodles”; the noodles are poured down a bamboo chute in ice-cold water and people must try to catch them with their chopsticks as they slide down. It can be tricky, but it’s a fun way to eat!





## Tanzaku

If you are in Japan for Tanabata you will see lots of colourful decorations, including coloured strips of paper called tanzaku which are hung up on bamboo. Traditionally, people would write a wish on tanzaku to pray for Orihime and Hikoboshi's reunion. Now many people write their own personal wish on tanzaku too.



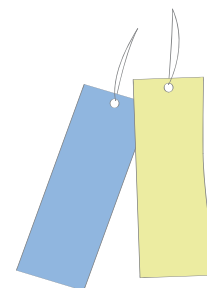
## Activity: Write a Tanzaku!



Make your own tanzaku with coloured paper/card by following the instructions below. You can also use our templates on the next page.

### You will need:

- Coloured Paper/Card
- String or ribbon
- Hole punch
- Pen
- Scissors



### Instructions:

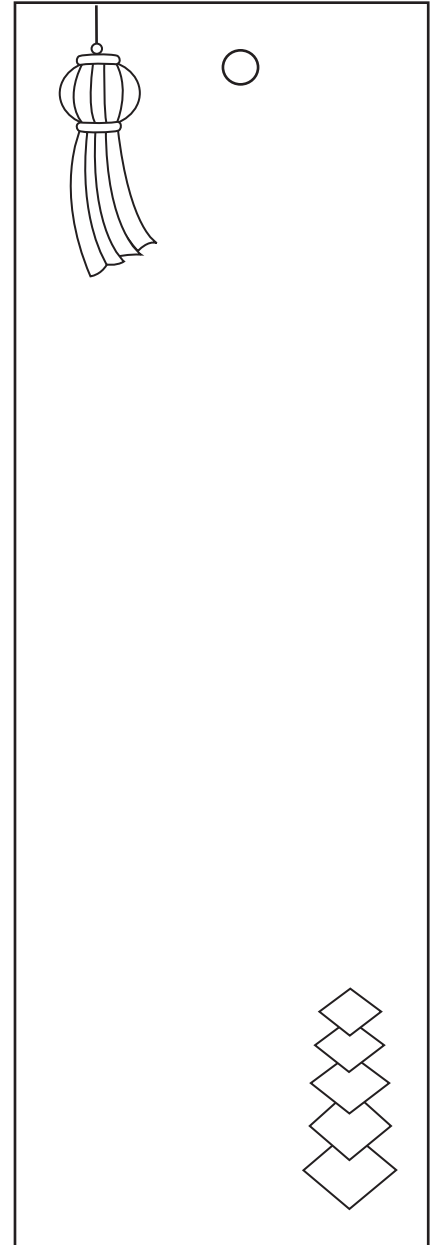
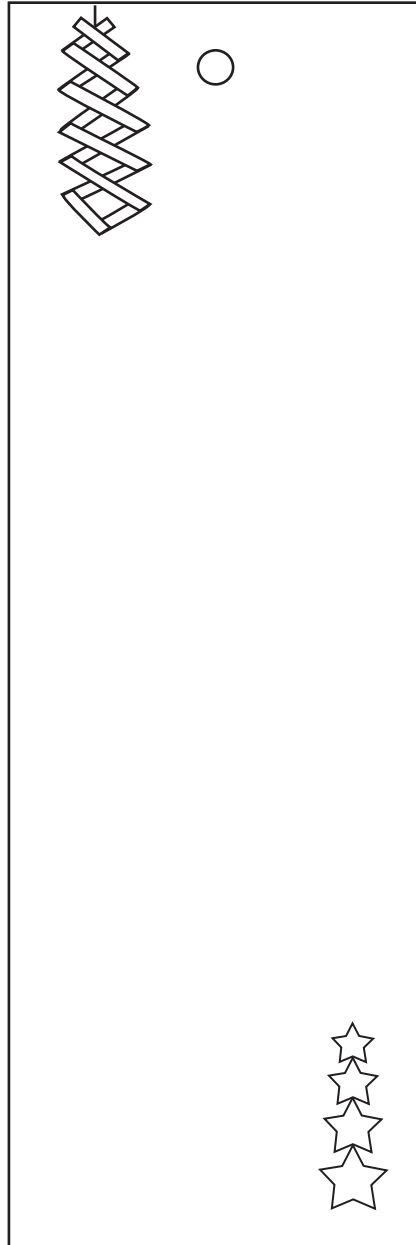
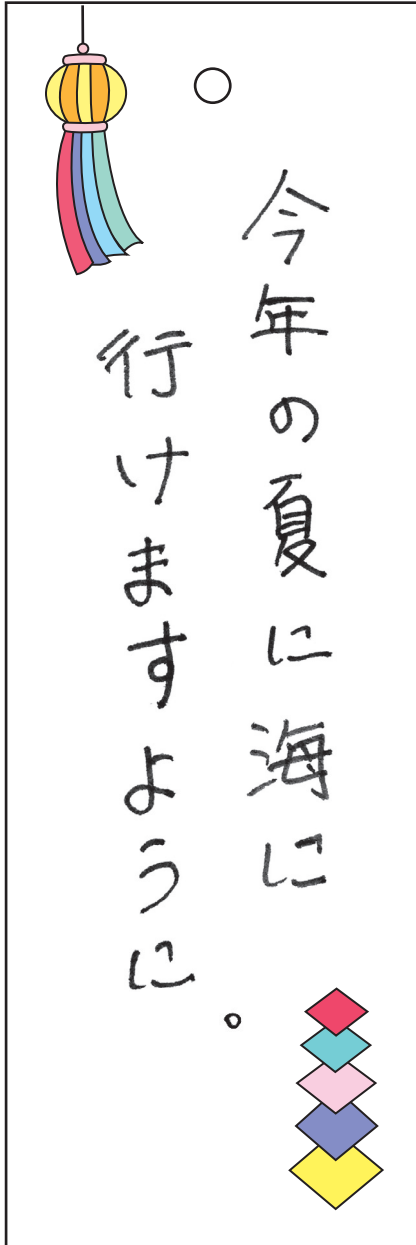
1. Cut out a rectangle of coloured paper or card. It should be roughly 7cm by 15cm, but it can be bigger or smaller.
2. Using a hole punch, make a hole in the top of the rectangle, about 1cm away from the edge.
3. Write your wish and your name on the tanzaku paper with a pen. You can add extra drawings or decorations if you like.
4. Thread ribbon or string through the hole and find a place to hang your wish.





## Activity: Tanzaku Templates

Make your tanzaku with our templates. Simply print and colour them in before carefully cutting each out. You can also use them to practice writing your wish. The example on the left is written in Japanese. It says "I hope to go to the beach this summer."



### Send us your tanzaku!

We would love to see what you have wished for this year. Send a photo of your finished tanzaku to [education@japansociety.org.uk](mailto:education@japansociety.org.uk) or tag us on social media and we will display it in our online gallery.



@japansocietylon



@JapanSocietyLondon

I hope  
to pass  
my exams  
this year

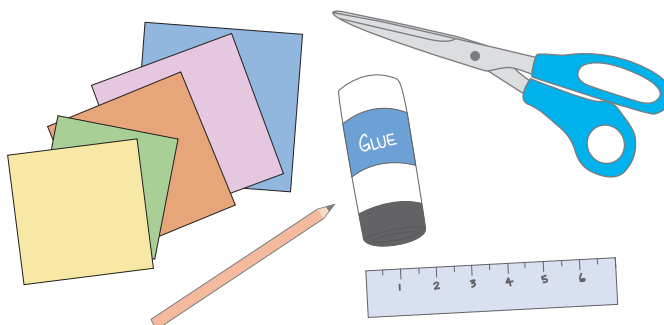
今年の夏に海に  
行きますように。

## Activity: Tanabata Decorations

Tanabata is famous for its bright and colourful decorations. As well as large decorations in towns and city centres, smaller displays of homemade paper decorations are common. Use this pack to make Tanabata decorations and display them with your tanzaku wish!

### You will need:

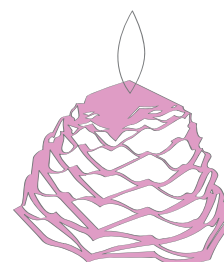
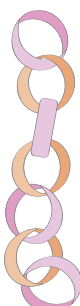
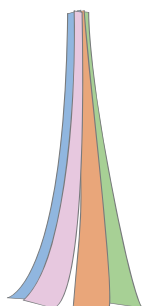
- origami/coloured paper
- scissors
- glue/glue stick
- ruler
- pen/pencil



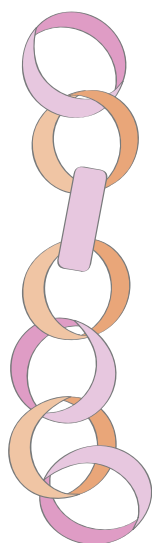
Suitable for all ★

Easy ★★

Fiddly ★★★

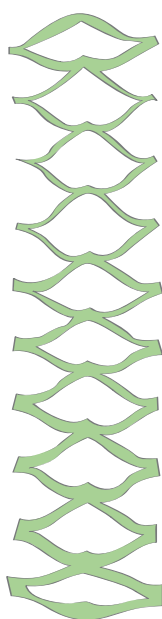






## Paper Chain

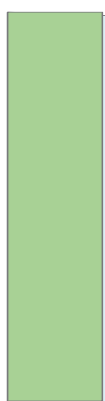
1. Cut strips of coloured paper approximately 10cm by 1cm (other lengths or widths also work!)
2. Put a small amount of glue on one end of the strip and stick it to the other end to make a loop.
3. Place another strip through the middle of the first loop and repeat step 2.



## Diamonds

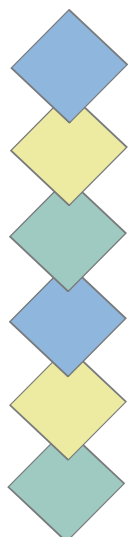
1. Start with a rectangle of coloured paper. Fold in half lengthwise to make a thinner rectangle (see **picture A**).
2. Use scissors to make cuts in alternate sides of the rectangle (see **picture B**). Try to space the cuts evenly and be careful not to cut all the way through.
3. Carefully unfold the rectangle and gently pull the top and the bottom apart to see the diamonds.

**A.**



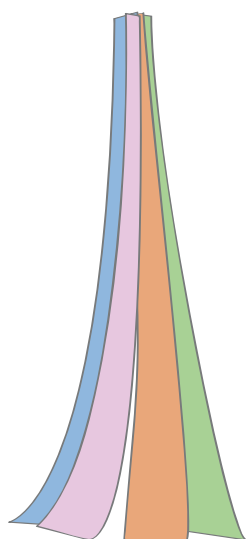
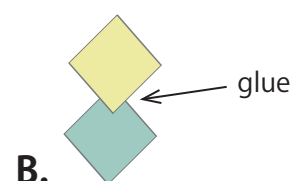
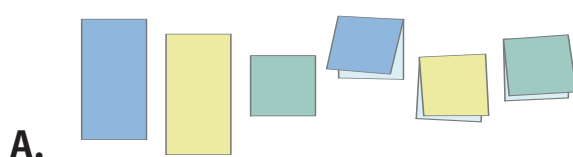
**B.**





## Square Ornament

1. Cut out rectangles of coloured paper approximately 3cm by 6cm (other lengths or widths also work!)
2. Then fold all the rectangles in half so they look like squares (see **picture A**).
3. Glue the squares together (see **picture B**).

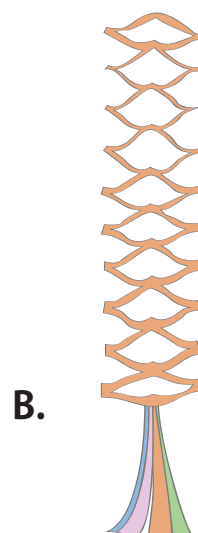
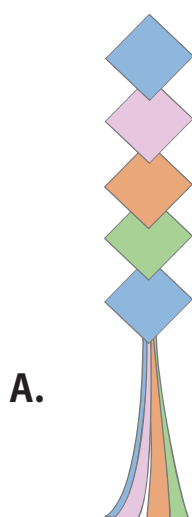


## Streamers

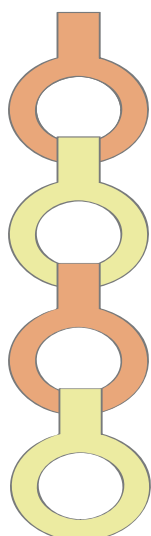
1. Cut long strips of paper in different colours.
2. Glue the strips onto the bottom of other tanabata decorations.

**Picture A** shows streamers attached to squares

**Picture B** shows streamers attached to the diamond.

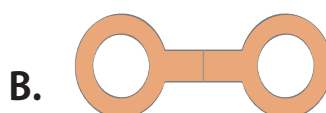
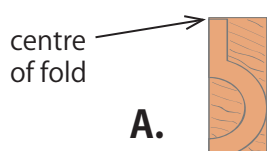






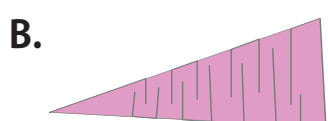
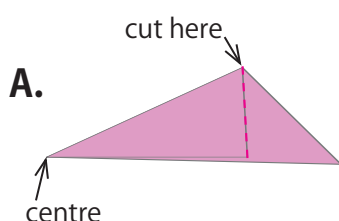
## Key

1. Cut out small rectangles of coloured paper approximately 3cm by 9cm (other sizes also work!)
2. Fold in half so the top edge meets the bottom edge and then fold in half lengthwise.
3. Draw the shape shown in **picture A** on the folded paper and carefully cut it out. Repeat steps 2 and 3 to make more keys.
4. Carefully link the keys together by threading a completely unfolded key (see **picture B**) through the hole of a key which is folded in half (see **picture C**).



## Net

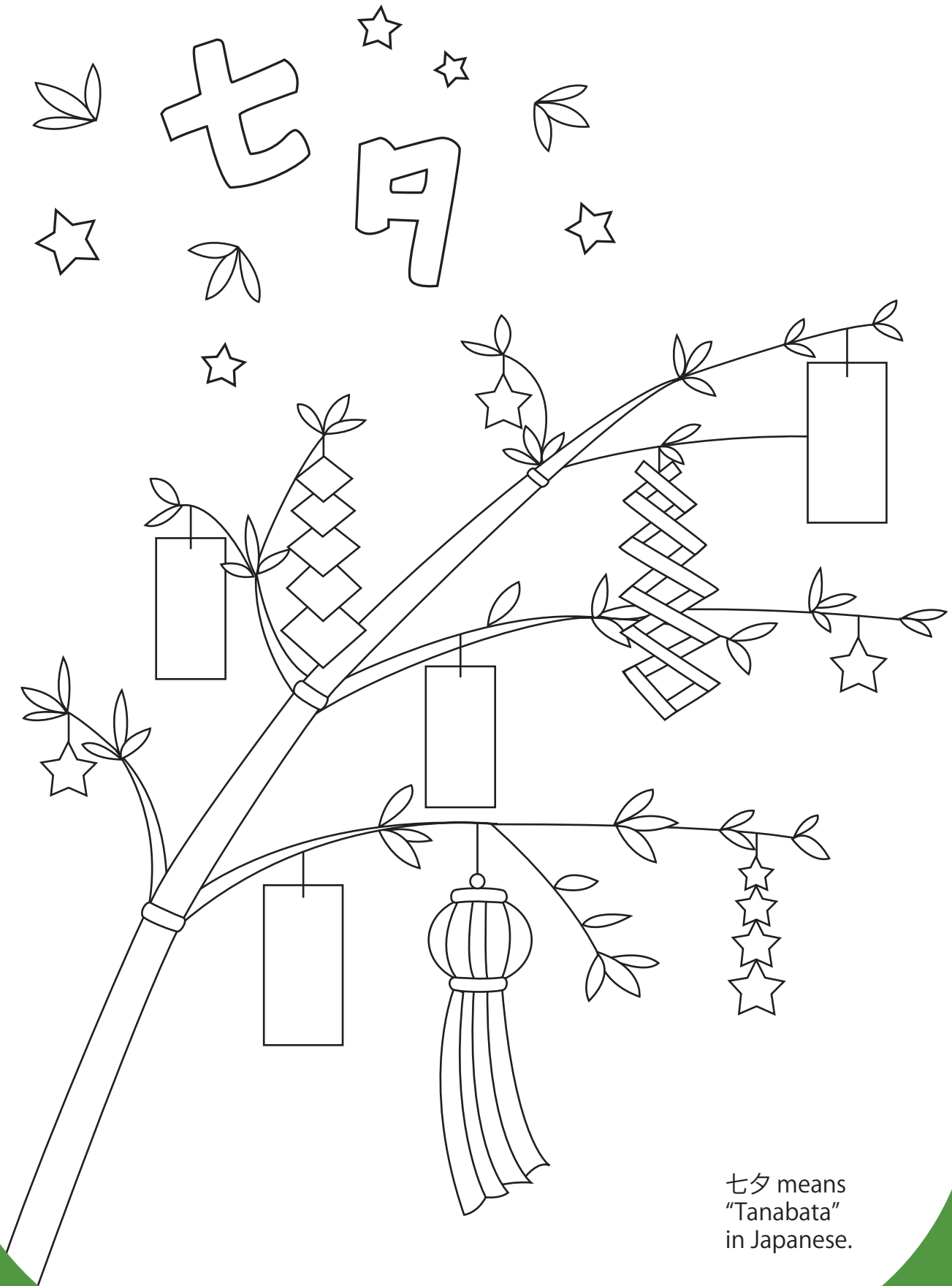
1. Start with a coloured square of paper approximately 15cm by 15cm. If only one side is coloured, begin with the white side face up.
2. Fold in half to make a triangle, then fold in half again to make a smaller triangle. Fold in half once more to make an even smaller triangle.
3. Now fold the top point of the triangle down to meet the bottom edge (see **picture A**) and then cut off the small excess triangle on the right.
4. Use scissors to make cuts in alternate sides of the triangle (see **picture B**). Space the cuts evenly and be careful not to cut all the way through. You don't need to cut right up to the centre.
5. Carefully unfold the net and gently tug the bottom to open it out. Stick a loop of paper or string onto the top of the net to hang it up.





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七夕 means  
"Tanabata"  
in Japanese.

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