

# International Family Services



## INTERNATIONAL FAMILY SERVICES

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Making a Difference in the Lives of Orphan Children

## Welcome to the World of International Adoption

Since our beginning in the early 1990s, International Family Services (IFS) has helped nearly 4000 orphaned children find forever homes. IFS is a respected leader in the world of international adoption and we understand the unique needs of the orphan child and their cry for a chance in life, a life that includes family. We are committed to bridging the gap between the orphan child in need of a mother and father, and prospective parents who can provide a home where children can grow in peace, security and love.

In the following pages you will learn about the process, the possibilities, and the challenges of international adoption. We hope that as you read you will gain a deeper understanding of the adoption process and how IFS can help you. We believe you will find International Family Services to be advocates for both the orphan child as well as the adoptive parent. The decision to adopt a child is one of the most important choices in life, both your life and in the life of a child. Our goal is to help you make an informed decision.

People adopt internationally for a variety of reasons. Some want to provide for children from less

developed countries, while others are motivated by having a family with an international flavor. Many parents choose to adopt children from other countries because of the relative speed with which they can complete the adoption process. For example, a typical adoption of an American child in the U.S. takes about two and a half years, but an international adoption can usually be completed in much less time. These advantages are offset by some additional risk in the adoption process, risk introduced largely by the lack of control Americans are able to exert over the foreign officials and agencies which direct the futures of the children available for adoption. Some parents have lost thousands of dollars when the adoption process goes off course after months of work and waiting. Many of these risks can be reduced, however, with experienced guidance and preparation.

Hague Accredited



CREDIBILITY • INTEGRITY • ACHIEVEMENT

## Meet Founders Bob and Carol Mardock

The Mardock adoption saga began when they were kids. Carol came from a proud Irish immigrant family that experienced family challenges along the way. At the age of six months she was sent to live with her aunt and uncle, who became Mom and Dad. As a grade schooler, Carol shared a common back-yard fence with Luanie, one of the first Korean-American adopted children to come to the U.S. in the 1950s. Together these two girls shared their appreciation for the opportunities provided by their non-biological parents. Carol grew up thinking that some day when she was married she would like to adopt, and, she wanted to adopt from Korea just like childhood friend Luanie had been.

When Bob was in high school, his parents opened their home to a Paul, who was a year younger than Bob. Paul needed family and parental stability in his life, and Mom and Pop welcomed him into the Mardock family as a foster son/brother for three years.

When Bob and Carol started dating in college they quickly discovered each other's adoption and foster parenting interests. By the time they married they were convinced that they would experience adoption as a family at some point in their lives together.

After they had five "bio" kids (three girls and two boys, daughter Lyndsie died at the age of four months of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome - SIDS) and experienced the rewards and hardships of being a foster family for a number of children, they decided it was time to adopt.



They adopted Marcie in 1985, joining them from Korea (remember Carol's dream of adopting a Korean child?) at the age of four months and was immediately loved by all. A very interesting thing happened after they adopted Marcie; they became the local adoption experts, a roll many adoptive parents find thrust upon them, and as time passed they found themselves advising and helping other families adopt both internationally and domestically.

In 1990 the world became aware of the tragic plight of thousands of orphaned Romanian children and the Mardocks again prepared the documents needed to adopt, this time a Romanian child. The Los Angeles Times learned of their interests and published a feature article about the family. The Wednesday newspaper was wrapped by the "View" section and there they were, front page for the world to see. The article found its way across the nation and soon calls came in from all over the country and internationally asking for advice and information about adoptions. International Family Services was born.

Over the next few years the Mardocks were joined by beautiful Angela, born 1990 in Romania, and Nickolas, also born 1990 in Russia. In December of 1999 Bob and Carol made their way back to Russia to adopt daughters Hannah, born 1998, and Christina, born 1999. Then, with the addition of foster/adopted daughter Dani as a 16 year old in 2000 they pretty well decided they were done, they think. Bob now explains that he has 10 children, all boys -- except for 7 girls. And all through the years they continued to provide foster care for many other children.

There is an interesting side note regarding Hannah and Christina. As the Mardocks were making preparations to adopt Hannah, Christina came into their lives. At five months old she was a six pound, emaciated little girl about to die of severe heart complications. Bob and Carol, with the help of son-in-law Mitch Ratzlaff, made arrangements in the U.S. for open heart surgery. The operation was a success, and for the next few weeks Christina recovered in their home. The family fell in love with her, and, well, the rest is history. Hannah AND Christina are now best friends with the grand kids who are the same age they are.

**In Bob and Carol's own words:** *The founding of International Family Services (IFS) is a sacrifice of love that has taken us around the world to places we could only dream of when we started this journey together. Between the two of us we've been on well over 100 international adventures and in countless orphanages and children's homes, and, now our staff is all over the map as well. Let's just say that our travel agent loves us.*

*We are thankful for the many who have come along side of us to help accomplish the call to save lives and bring families together. Our special relationship with our talented staff, both state-side and international, our adoption consultants, our caring social workers, other agencies who have chosen to partner with IFS, and, of course, the families who have opened their lives to a child in need, are reasons why we have been able to do what we do. It is by the grace of God that we get to serve Him this way.*

## Your Role as an Adoptive Parent

As a prospective parent, you will need to complete three basic sets of paperwork in order to adopt internationally.

**Home Study Paper Work** - As with domestic adoption, people who are seeking an international adoption must complete a study conducted by a qualified social worker describing their suitability as parents. The social worker who completes this home study usually has obtained a Masters Degree in Social Work, is licensed by their state, and works under the supervision of a state-licensed adoption agency. Texas, Oregon, Arizona, Pennsylvania and Arkansas residents have the convenience of having International Family Services (licensed in each of those states to provide complete adoption services, including home studies) to complete their home study. In order to complete this study, prospective parents must gather numerous documents ranging from birth and marriage certificates to employment and police records. The U.S. and foreign governments will draw upon this document, in addition to other documents, as they qualify you for adoption.

**U.S. Government Paper Work** - In addition to the home study, prospective parents must submit an application to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS - formerly known as Immigration and Naturalization Service) for approval to adopt a child from overseas. Once the application has been submitted, along with the required documentation, a form will be issued which approves you to adopt a foreign child. Foreign governments often need to see this approval before they will allow you to complete the adoption process in their country. After an international child has been referred to you, USCIS will also issue a statement which approves the child for adoption and immigration into the US. Finally, they will issue a travel visa for the child in the foreign country's US Embassy.

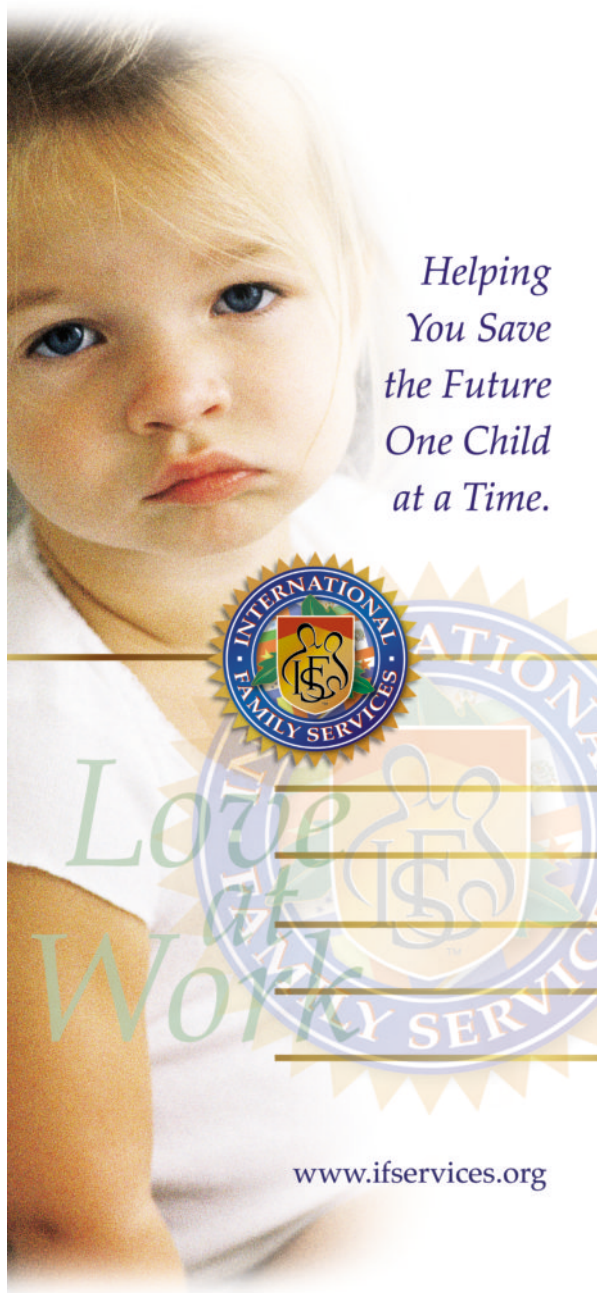
**Foreign Government Paper Work** - The third set of paperwork, called a dossier, must be completed to satisfy the requirements of the foreign government. These documents vary by country and range widely from extra references to statements of infertility. The list of required documents may vary from year to year and depends upon the foreign government agencies involved.

## Other People Play a Part

Many people have influence over whether or not you receive approval to adopt or, once approved, over the timing of when you actually receive your child. During this process you will directly or indirectly deal with USCIS officials, adoption agencies, U.S. Embassies, foreign officials, lawyers, judges, and regulators.

## What IFS Will Do for You

International Family Services helps families from all 50 states, and US citizens living abroad, navigate the maze of adoption paperwork and connects them with available children in foreign countries where we have spent many years developing adoption relationships and business networks. Our reputation for ethical and honest work has earned us the trust of the people who direct the adoption services in these countries. As a result, we refer between 100 - 350 international children into American homes every year. International Family Services is licensed in the states of Texas, Oregon, Arizona, Pennsylvania and Arkansas to provide adoption services, including home studies, for residents of those states.



*Helping  
You Save  
the Future  
One Child  
at a Time.*

[www.ifservices.org](http://www.ifservices.org)

# Q&A

## Ten Frequently Asked Questions

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### **1 . How long do I have to wait before I can get a child?**

This depends on the age of the child you want and the foreign program and country involved. Generally, adoptions are finalized within nine to twelve months of a completed dossier for most programs.

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### **2 . Do I have to travel to the country involved?**

Most programs require that at least one parent travel to the child's country at least once. Escort service can sometimes be arranged in a few programs.

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### **3 . How much information will I have about the child's health before I adopt?**

Adopting parents will know the medical histories for children when we have them. However, due to the many variables surrounding the child's arrival at the orphanage, the histories may be sketchy and sometimes unknown. The present medical condition of the child is based upon a physician's examination and is made known to the adopting parents.

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### **4 . Are there other costs related to the adoption which are not included in the IFS fee?**

Yes. The IFS fee does not include a variety of miscellaneous expenses, a few of which are significant. For example, the following costs are incurred by the adopting family in addition to the IFS fee:

- Visas for the parents and child.
- Physical exam for the foreign child in order to receive visa.
- Travel-related expenses (travel, food and lodging; program descriptions may have these estimates in some cases).
- Orphanage fee/donation in some cases.
- The costs of assembling the dossiers (e.g. parent's birth certificates, notaries, foreign authentication of documents, overnight deliveries, postage, long distance, etc.
- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service fee.
- Home study (cost varies by state and adoption agency).

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### **5 . Is there any restriction on the age of the parents who wish to adopt?**

Many people who are 40 to 50 years old ask if their age restricts their ability to adopt. In Asian countries, age actually is viewed as an indicator of stability. In other countries, the age of the parent(s) is generally not a problem. However, we do ask the country officials if we suspect a problem.

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### **6 . I'm divorced and remarried. Does this limit me concerning an adoption?**

A single divorce and remarriage does not hinder the adoption process. However, multiple divorces and remarriages indicates an unstable home life. This causes concern for some of the foreign agencies which approve the adoptions.

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### **7 . I'm a single parent. Can I still adopt a child internationally?**

Some countries allow for single-parent adoptions. Our foreign sources discourage single fathers who want to adopt.

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### **8 . Does IFS do home studies?**

International Family Services, Inc. is a non-profit child referral and humanitarian aid organization under IRS code 501(c)(3). We work internationally to identify adoptable children for referral to licensed agencies within the U.S. and Canada and individual families with agency approved home studies. IFS is also a child placing agency licensed in the State of Texas. IFS is home to IFS of Oregon, IFS of Pennsylvania and IFS of Arizona. We offer home studies and post-placement services in these states only.

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**9 . How do you screen for serious medical conditions such as HIV and fetal alcohol syndrome?**

A complete blood work up is done on each child before the child is admitted to orphanages in Eastern Europe. The results are made available to the adopting parents. Screening for FAS is usually done by a physician, in some cases by a team of physicians. In addition, the IFS Executive Director has specialized training and years of experience in the education of children with special needs, including FAS.

**10. How much say do I have in which child I get?**

The final decision is yours to make. IFS uses the information you place on your application about the kind of child you are willing to take (age, gender, medical condition, etc.). When we find a child that matches your criteria, we will submit him or her to you for approval. If you have a valid reason for not accepting that child, we will search for another. Some parents indicate that they are open to adopt a child who, for example, has a minor correctable medical condition. Yet, when they get to the point of saying, "I'll take that child with a cleft palette," they realize that they in fact cannot handle the situation. They want to change their criteria to exclude these conditions. In these cases, we will modify our search.

## Five Adoption Myths

**Myth 1 "Gerber babies are available."**

Many of these children have lived in institutions and almost all are there because their parents could not take care of them or are not living. This has some affect upon the mental, physical and emotional well-being of the child. The orphanages do the best they can but sometimes children are undernourished and often under-loved.

**Reality: Children may have physical, emotional, and behavioral challenges.**

**Myth 2 "Foreign courts, contacts, and agencies work like ours in the U.S."**

Differences in cultural mores and political systems lead to different expectations of what is considered expedient processing of paperwork and granting of approvals. Americans cannot demand that their expectations of service be met. A foreign agent could say, "I'll get right on it." They may really mean "Tomorrow or next week."

**Reality: Work in foreign countries is at best different.**  
**Corollary: Different is not wrong; be patient.**

**Myth 3 "Fill out your initial paperwork and that's all you have to do."**

Sometimes we are told by foreign governments after the fact that certain conditions have not been met concerning various features of the documents (e.g. the type of seal has been changed, a specific person must be named, a particular phrase must be included or avoided, etc.). Other times we are told that additional documents are unexpectedly required.

**Reality: Demands for paperwork continue until the child is in your home.**

**Myth 4 "IFS will call me every day with an update."**

**Reality: We will contact you when we have news about your adoption.**

**Myth 5 "All adoptions are the same."**

Sometimes two families from the same town are seeking a child through IFS from the same country. One will get their child in 6 months after completing their dossier. The other family compares notes and concludes that their child should arrive within the next 2 weeks. They become very disappointed when it takes 6 weeks. Yet, due to the variations between each family (e.g. the state of their dossier), their expectations of what kind of child they want (age, gender, medical condition, etc.), and the conditions of the child (family, legal status, personal history, etc.) each adoption is unique.

**Reality: No one adoption can be directly compared to another one.**

## EXPLORING ADOPTION?

### UNDERSTANDING THE CAN-DO SPIRIT

Adoption can be one of the most exciting events in a family's life. It can also be emotionally challenging. We like to tell people from the very beginning that the process of adoption is not for the faint of heart. The information in this packet will help you develop that can-do attitude that makes the whole process work.



## General Adoption Information

All documents for any foreign adoption must be notarized, unless otherwise noted. Certification or apostilles from the Secretary of State may be required, depending on the country. Authentication by the consulate office in the U.S. may also be required. The individual program descriptions will specify the need for various documentation. (Individual program descriptions are provided upon receipt of your IFS Contract and Services Agreement and IFS fee.)

### Initial USCIS Paperwork

The initial paperwork needed for the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service, or USCIS (formerly known as Immigration and Naturalization Service) includes:

- Completed Form I-600A or I-800A (depending on whether your country of choice is a Hague Convention country or not) with a check or money order. This form may be downloaded at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov).
- A separate check or money order for fingerprinting services for each person living in the household 18 years of age and older. USCIS will notify you of when and where you can be printed.
- Copies of your birth certificates or proof of U.S. Citizenship. (Your local USCIS office will notify you if originals are needed.)
- Copies of your marriage certificate and/or divorce decrees, if applicable. (Your local USCIS office will notify you if originals are needed.)
- Home Study prepared by a child placement agency licensed in the state where you reside. Your local USCIS office may require

the I-864, Affidavit of Support, when you submit your home study.

Call USCIS for your nearest Citizenship and Immigration office or visit [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) for a list of local offices.

Note: Send in the application, application fee, and the fingerprinting fee even if you do not have these other documents yet.

### Additional USCIS Paperwork

Additional paperwork needed for USCIS either before or during your trip overseas may include:

- Completed Form I-600 or I-800 with the child(ren)'s adoption documents (this includes at least a birth certificate and adoption decree; other documents may be required depending upon the country). In the case of a convention country adoption (requiring the filing of an I-800) there will be additional USCIS documentation required to complete your I-800.

### Readoption and Your Child's Visa

Your child will receive either an I.R.3 or an I.R.4 visa. I.R.3 ("immediate relative") means that you (both you and your spouse, if you are married) saw your child before the adoption was complete in his or her home country. If this is not the case, then your child will receive an I.R.4 visa in his or her passport.

If your child has an I.R.3 visa, then you do not need to readopt your child before you can file for U.S. citizenship for your child. However, if your child has an I.R.4 visa, then you will need to readopt your child in your local (usually county) court. The requirements for readoption (or finalization, as it is sometimes

called) vary from state to state and sometimes from judge to judge, but usually some form of post-adoption reports need to be conducted and submitted by a licensed social worker and/or child placing agency (your home study provider is a natural choice).

You will also have to submit adoption and other papers from the international courts. The court will issue an adoption decree. You will apply for a citizenship certificate for your child with USCIS via the form N-643.



As of February 27, 2002, all adopted children arriving in the U.S. with an I.R.3 visa are automatically U.S. citizens. Children arriving on an I.R.4 visa with an

adoption decree from a foreign court are also U.S. citizens. Children arriving on an I.R.4 visa under a court ordered guardianship (as do children from India) will not become U.S. citizens until their adoption is finalized in a U.S. court by their adoptive parents. For more information on the Child Citizenship Act which grants this automatic citizenship, see <http://www.house.gov/delahunt/adoptcit.htm>.

In order to receive proof of U.S. citizenship for their adoptive children, parents may submit a N-643 form to USCIS ([www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov)). Or, they may apply for a U.S. passport (for more information see <http://travel.state.gov/childcitfaq.html>). The Joint Council on International Children's Services recommends the latter as the best option.

**NOTE:** Information subject to change without notice. Contact IFS for the latest information pertaining to your specific country of choice.

## Fees Not Included in the IFS Agency Coordination Fee

The following items are not included in the IFS agency coordination fee:

- USCIS processing fee.
- fingerprinting fee (for each person living in the household over the age of 18 years).
- Document notary, certification, apostilles, or authentications.
- Home study and post-adoption report fees.
- Readoption expenses (when applicable).
- Certificate of U.S. Citizenship fee when you file the N- 643 for your child.
- Orphanage donations
- Travel expenses for you and your child.
- Escort costs (if applicable).
- U.S. visa for child.
- Medical and vaccinations for U.S. child's visa interview.
- Parent's visa (if applicable).

## Home Study and Post-Adoption Report Guidelines

IFS will accept international home studies only from a licensed agency in the client's state of residence.

Residents of Texas, Oregon, Arizona, Pennsylvania and Arkansas have the convenience of having their home study completed by one of our licensed adoption agencies: International Family Services (Texas), IFS of Oregon, IFS of Arizona, IFS of Pennsylvania, IFS of Arkansas. Clients will need to contact their respective office for the cost of a home study in their state.

Local states and/or foreign governments require that post-adoption home visits and reports be filed. The number of required visits vary from country to country and state to state. Contact your local home study agency for more information.

The international home study fees and post-adoption report fees are not included in the IFS fee although IFS requires fully refundable post-adoption deposits (see the Adoption Services, Agreement and Contract).

## Hope For Children Act

On May 26, 2001 the Hope for Children Act was passed. The Hope for Children Act amends the existing adoption tax credit to:

- Remove the current law's sunset provision, thus making the adoption tax credit permanent
- Increase the maximum credit allowable from \$5,000 to \$10,000
- Provide for annual adjustments for inflation to the maximum allowable
- Increase income limitations so that families with incomes up to \$150,000 can qualify for the full credit with graduated step-down to an income maximum of \$190,000.

**NOTE:** IFS and its representatives are not qualified to give tax advice. Clients should contact their tax advisor for complete details on tax credits and their adoption.





## Where Do You Go From Here

If you decide that IFS can help you find a child to love as your own, you can begin the adoption process with us by following these steps.

**Step One** - In the packet you receive from us, you will find the following:

- IFS Application
- IFS Contract and Services Agreement

Read these over carefully. They describe in detail the risks inherent in international adoptions and the exact services we provide for you.

**Step Two** - Review the program descriptions (make sure you have an up-to-date copy). The current costs, documents, limitations and procedures are listed for each of our foreign programs. Your choice of program will depend upon your interest in a particular country of origin as well as the practical considerations of documentation, travel, and costs.

**Step Three** - If you wish to adopt internationally, complete the IFS Application for Adoption and the International Family Services Adoption Services Agreement and Contract. IFS will begin to work on your behalf when we have received your Application and application fee of \$400 and the appropriate Service Agreement and Contract(s) and a cashier's check for the agency coordination Fee of \$4,550 (\$4950 total) for those contracting for traditional international adoption services, \$5,550 (\$5950 total) for non-U.S. residents. Once your application and contract is received we will open a file for you and begin to help you through the labyrinth of paperwork. The referral and adoption process for a child varies by country, both in procedure and length of time, but is done with your input and desires in mind. After you receive a child referral, we will monitor the legal process required by your child's home country. Unforeseen delays can occur. Though IFS can assume no responsibility for such delays, we will continually strive to complete all adoptions, or provide other referrals should an adoption fail.

## Stay Current with Program Features

The field of international adoptions can change quickly. Thus, program features are subject to change without prior notice, including fees, program requirements, USCIS procedures, time lines, and the availability of children. Please contact your IFS representative for current information.



## About International Family Services

International Family Services, Inc. is a U.S. non-profit organization organized under IRS code 501(c)(3) whose specific objectives and purposes are to aid children living in orphanages or untenable situations and to aid orphanages and child welfare organizations around the world through donations and financial support. Our primary goal is to aid children in finding homes and adoptive families by providing adoption related services to families and agencies throughout North America.

International Family Services (Texas) and its affiliated non-profit organizations IFS of Oregon, IFS of Arizona, IFS of Pennsylvania and IFS of Arkansas are each licensed as child-placing adoption agencies and are able to provide home studies to adoptive families who are residents of their respective states.

International Family Services helps to complete between 100 and 350 adoptions per year and either currently works or has worked in the countries of China, Vietnam, Romania, Russia, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Marshall Islands, Ethiopia, Moldova and India.

International Family Services has a complete staff of professionals in the U.S., including 20 full-time, part-time staff and adoption consultant offices strategically located around the U.S., and numerous international staff.

International Family Services also provides humanitarian aid to the countries where we work and has distributed more than \$3,000,000 in humanitarian relief on behalf of needy and orphaned children since the early 1990s.

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