7 Steps To Mental Mastery

Powerful Mental Skills You Can Use to Achieve Anything You Want!

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STEP #1
If You Want To Get Ahead, Get SMART

Let's get started right away with one of the most important mental skills you can ever develop:

Goal Setting

I remember reading an academic study that evaluated a group of students in college, and then re-evaluated them 20 years later.

The study found that the students who had become the most successful in life weren't necessarily the ones who had achieved the highest grades.

They were the ones who had written down specific goals, 20 years earlier.

Now while your exact definition of "success" may differ from mine or anyone else's, most people would agree that it's about getting what you want out of life.

And that's what goal setting does for you. It addresses the most important - and perhaps most difficult - question of them all:

What do you actually WANT?

There's an old saying: "If you don't know where you want to go, you'll never get there."

So many people drift through life feeling frustrated and resentful that their life is going nowhere. Or even worse... it's definitely going somewhere but in the totally wrong direction - usually driven by somebody else.

Your first step has to be working out where you want to go. You need a target... an objective... a destination...

A goal.

Now before we get into the actual process of setting goals, let's just define what a "goal" is.

A goal is a picture you hold in your mind of an end result. This concept is so important, I'm going to repeat it:

"A goal is a picture you hold in your mind of an end result"

If you can't see the dartboard, you can't hit the bulls eye.
The end result you hold in your mind represents the achievement of something you want to **BE, DO or HAVE**.

And one of the best ways to work out what you want in life is to answer those three questions:

- What do you want to be?
- What do you want to do?
- What do you want to have?

Only you can answer those questions. Answer them honestly and you're halfway there.

What you need to do next is to get down to business and work on crystallizing those answers into real scientific goals.

To do that, use...

**The SMART Formula For Success**

There's a well-known acronym to assist in formulating your goals, known as the S.M.A.R.T. system.

(Interestingly, there are at least 12 different interpretations of what the letters S.M.A.R.T. actually stand for!)

Here's the system I use and recommend:

- **S** - Specific
- **M** - Measurable
- **A** - Action-oriented
- **R** - Relevant
- **T** - Time-limited

Let's look at these 5 qualities in detail:

1. **Specific**...

... means that you describe your goal in as much detail as possible.

For example, instead of dreaming about a "new car", you decide on a BMW 320i, black, 2 years old, with chrome trim.

The more precise you can be, the better the system works.
2. **Measurable...**

... means that you'll know when you've achieved your goal.

That's why "happy" or "successful" are not goals as such. How will you know when you're successful? When you pass a certain exam? When you secure a certain job? A certain salary? Then write it down.

3. **Action-oriented...**

... means that the goal can be divided into a series of smaller steps or "actions" that you can take towards completion.

So climbing a mountain is an action-oriented goal. Whereas "being comfortable" isn't a goal. It's simply a state of mind (which could of course be an enjoyable by-product arising from the completion of an important goal).

4. **Relevant...**

... means that the goal is important to *you*. It's something that you genuinely want, that fits in with your values and beliefs, and that you are prepared to work towards.

It's important to distinguish here between a goal and a passing thought.

For example, you may like the notion of becoming a top athlete, but are you really prepared to get up at 5 am and train every single day for the next 5 years?

5. **Time-limited...**

... simply means you have to put a deadline on achieving your goal.

Why?

Well suppose you have forever to do something... how long is it going to take?

That's right, forever. So add a realistic completion date to your goal.

And that's the SMART system for setting goals. There's just one more thing you need to know...

**Write Your Goals Down And Read Them Daily**

A goal is not a goal unless it's written down.

The act of putting something into writing is a very powerful process. It shows commitment on your part, but more than that, your deeper mind immediately
starts going to work on how to achieve the goal. More about this in a later lesson.

So write your goals down, ideally using pen and paper, although you can use a text file on your computer if you prefer.

Just keep your goals handy and read over them twice a day, every day. The best times are just after you wake up, and just before retiring to bed.

**Action Point:**

Choose at least one goal and write it down using the SMART formula.

You'll probably find that as you select one goal, others pop into your mind. That's fine. Pick as many goals as you want and write them down too.

Okay, enough for today. Will you take 5 or 10 minutes now to do the goal-setting exercise -- or will you "do it later"?

It's up to you. It's your life.
STEP #2

BID Your Way To Success

When you start something new in life, it’s easy to feel that the challenge is bigger than you are, and you inevitably run into that fearsome emotional monster known as “overwhelm”.

Overwhelm rears its head because the human mind can only hold about 7 thoughts in short-term memory at any one time.

Only 7.

Now that isn’t much when you think of everything you have to do today, never mind your long-term life goals!

So what you need to do is simplify, so that you only have a few things to think of at any one time.

You’ve probably heard the expression:

"By the mile it's a pile, by the inch it's a cinch"?

There is more wisdom in that little phrase than you can ever imagine.

- Every great mountain was conquered one step at a time.
- Every great book was written one word at a time.
- Every great work of art was painted one stroke at a time.

There is no goal you cannot achieve if you'll just use the same magic formula for doing anything.

And at this point, I’d like to introduce you to…

The B.I.D. System

What does B.I.D. stand for?

Break… It… Down…!

The BID technique helps you achieve your goal the easy way by breaking it down into a series of manageable steps.
I first learned this amazing technique as a trainee computer programmer working for a big financial company. We were developing complex investment software, and the way the complexity was managed taught me a lot about achieving any goal in life.

Here's how it works:

You start with the big picture - the end result. Then you break it down into "chunks". You then sub-divide each chunk into smaller chunks. And you keep sub-dividing until you're left with a series of individual tasks.

Okay, stay with me here. It's much easier to understand with a practical example, so I'll use the analogy of climbing a mountain...

Let's say you want to climb Mount Everest. So you define your goal like this:

"Climb to the summit of Mount Everest by July 30th, 2007."

Okay you've defined your goal. Now you start breaking it down into the largest, most logical "chunks".

For the sake of this example, let's suppose you have no climbing experience at all.

(In which case you're certainly ambitious!)

Your high-level "chunks" would look something like this:

- Learn to climb
- Plan expedition
- Climb Everest

You then take each high-level chunk and sub-divide it into smaller groups. Taking the first chunk, you would get something like this:

- Learn to climb
  - Find climbing school
  - Take lessons
  - Practice climbing on other mountains

Now that's better, you're beginning to see a clearer picture. But you still need more details, so you "chunk down" again. Taking the first step again, you would get this:

Learn to climb:
- Find climbing school
  - Buy climbing magazines
  - Find local mountaineering society
  - Consult yellow pages ads
  - Make phone calls
  - Choose course
  - Reserve place on course of choice

And voila! You have the first steps of a plan.

Do you see how this works? You would do this for each chunk, and keep going until you've divided the entire project right down into simple tasks.

Before you know it, you have a complete road map that will get you where you want to go. No need to feel overwhelmed now. Once you have your completed map, you just follow it one tiny baby step at a time.

I truly believe that this technique is the key to success in practically anything. It literally allows you to create your own road map to just about anywhere you want to go.

Of course, you've still got to take the steps, and we'll talk more about that in an upcoming lesson.

**Action point:**

Get started on a BID map for a goal of your choice. It can be a massive goal or a tiny little job you've got to do today. Anything you want.

Pull out a fresh piece of paper, or open up a text file on your computer, and get started right away!
STEP #3
Solve Any Problem You Can Imagine

You've set your goals, and you've written a step-by-step plan using the BID technique. At this point I have some bad news for you:

There are going to be problems.

You will ALWAYS face problems in anything you do - that's just the way life works.

But what matters most - and what separates the winners from the 'also rans' - is how you deal with the "challenges and opportunities" that life throws in your path.

So today's lesson focuses on the critical skill of...

**Problem Solving.**

Okay. There are problems... and then there are PROBLEMS!

Some problems can be solved using the classic analytical method, similar to the way a Doctor would diagnose a medical problem.

With this approach, you would look at the symptoms, identify the fault, and then provide some kind of remedy.

Ideal for when your car breaks down or your computer won't start up.

When it comes to most problems in life, however, the analytical method doesn't work, because there is nothing "broken" as such.

The problems I'm talking about now are so familiar you may not even be aware of them.

Like when you feel stuck, you don't know where to turn, you don't know what to do next, or you feel you've reached a road block on the way to your goal.

With these problems, you can't call out a repair person to come and fix them. You've got to use something else....

... your natural CREATIVITY.

**Getting Creative**
Have you ever forgotten someone's name, spent ages straining to remember it, and then finally given up... only to have it suddenly pop into your mind later on when you weren't even thinking about it?

That's what you call the "Eureka!" effect, and it's an example of your natural creative problem-solving ability at work.

Creative problem-solving takes place at the subconscious level.

What happens is you turn a problem over to your subconscious mind, which then goes to work on the problem without you being aware of it. When it's ready, your subconscious mind delivers the answer.

**Your Amazing Subconscious**

Yesterday I mentioned that the conscious mind can only hold around 7 pieces of information in short-term memory.

Your SUB-conscious mind, however, stores ALL the knowledge you've ever acquired. Everything you've ever read, heard, thought or imagined is held within its immense bank vaults.

To get an idea how powerful your subconscious is, imagine a yacht floating around on the Pacific Ocean.

Your conscious mind is the yacht.

Your subconscious mind is the ocean.

When you struggled to remember the person's name, you tried using your conscious mind, and eventually you "gave up". But your subconscious mind picked up on the problem and went to work.

It trawled through its vast database, began making connections between various bits of information, eventually retrieved the name for you, and presented it to your conscious mind in an "Aha!" moment of inspiration.

And the good news is, you can call on this unconscious problem-solving process anytime you want...

When you get a problem you can't see a way out of, don't struggle with it. Instead, just "pass it over" to your subconscious mind.

How do you do this?

NOT by focusing on the problem, but on the SOLUTION.
If you concentrate on the problem itself, you'll make it worse. You'll end up worrying about it, you'll make it appear bigger than it is, and you'll just stay stuck with it. You always get what you focus on. Remember that.

Focus on the solution.

Now you're probably wondering how you can focus on the "solution" at this stage. After all, if you knew that you'd no longer have the problem... right?

When I say focus on the solution, I mean imagine at a deeper level that the problem has already been solved. It's really a combination of insight and faith - you just "know" that the solution is en-route and it will appear soon.

The creative problem-solving process is similar to the goal-setting exercise, where you focus on an end result. The difference is that here you're not focusing so much on an image (like a new house) but a FEELING of having solved the problem.

What happens is that your subconscious mind picks up on the input coming down from your conscious mind, and immediately gets to work on how to bring the solution into reality.

When your subconscious works out the answer it will let you know, usually when you least expect it.

Sometimes the answer appears almost like a flash of bright light - the true "Eureka!" moment.

Other times the answer materializes more subtly. You begin to get a sense of "something". Perhaps an image begins to form in your mind's eye. Or you remember something somebody said. Or you get a hunch to go somewhere or do something.

However it comes, the solution will appear.

There is nothing "magical" or "mysterious" about this process. It's just the way your mind naturally works.

**Sleep On It**

The best time to turn a problem over to your subconscious mind is just before you drop off to sleep. For one thing you're relaxed, and your conscious mind is closing down for the day, leaving your subconscious a clear space to get to work.

Try it and you might be amazed at the results. You may have the solution when you wake up in the morning.
**Action Point**

Choose a problem that's been bothering you. Stop worrying about it as worry is counter-productive to resolving it.

Instead, turn it over to your subconscious mind as explained above. Do this every time you find yourself thinking about the problem.

Have faith in the process and exercise patience. You'll get the answer to your problem soon enough.
STEP #4
You Want To *Earn* It? Then *Learn* It!

Look at the lives of successful people and you'll discover one thing they all have in common:

Lifelong learning.

Earners are learners because they know that times change, old methods are replaced by new ideas, and you've got to *stay* in the race before you can hope to win it.

And never has learning been more important than in today's world which is changing at an alarming rate.


Automation through computerization has made many once "steady" jobs redundant.

The Internet and digital communications have allowed companies to operate anywhere on the planet. As a result, they can outsource work to poorer countries and of course lower costs mean higher profits.

Never before has it been so critical for individuals to keep learning and keep developing new skills. The days of training once and working in the same job for 40 years are gone forever.

Of course there will always be jobs and opportunities available. But they'll be jobs of the mind.

The future belongs to those who can think creatively, and who possess *specialized knowledge* that cannot easily be automated or outsourced.

The old phrase "Knowledge is Power" has never been truer.

At the same time, we live in an age when learning has never been easier. Just look at what you have available to you right now...

- The World's collective knowledge, right at your fingertips, via millions of web pages!
- Amazon.com: Earth's largest selection of books, ready for shipping to you tonight!
- Thousands of reports, emails, memos, documents, newsletters, newspapers, magazines and periodicals!
All waiting to be read - by you!

But there’s a problem... isn’t there?

Time.

"I'll read it when I have some time."

Let me share a secret with you:

**There will never be any more time.**

- There will always be 24 hours a day.
- There will always be things to do.
- There will always be challenges and a life to live.

This is it. So what do you do about it?

Well, there are 2 actions you can take:

**1. Get the Study Habit**

Implement your own study program - today!

I think it was Brian Tracy who said that you can become an expert in any subject in two months, just by reading about it 20 minutes a day.

20 minutes a day. That’s all.

Get up 20 minutes earlier, or go to bed 20 minutes later. Read in your lunch hour, or on the bus, or give up a TV show, or do whatever it takes to get that 20 minute study period.

Choose a subject that takes you closer to your goal, grab your reading material, and get started.

**2. Learn to Speed Read.**

Speed reading is one of the smartest skills you can ever acquire.

If you can double your current reading speed, you can read twice as much in the same period of time, which means you'll learn twice as much for the same effort.
However there's more to it than that...

When you read faster, you understand more of what you read, and you retain more too.

That's because most people only read at half the speed of their normal thinking speed, and so most of the brain simply gets bored and loses concentration waiting for the reading part to catch up.

If you can get your 'reading speed' up to your 'thinking speed' then you integrate the whole brain in the reading process, and wonderful things start to happen.

Great - but how do you read faster?

In the past I've tried several speed reading courses.

One claimed that you could "read" thousands of words a minute. You can't. That's just marketing hype. You're human, not a machine.

Other courses had you doing strange things with your fingers, pointed sticks, and weird book-holding exercises. All very interesting, but none of it helped my reading speed.

Then I came across Dr Peter Sheperd and his brilliant course: "The New Science of Speed Reading".

This course employs all the latest research in cognitive psychology and provides you with a practical system for increasing your reading speed naturally.

In particular, it highlights the one huge secret of speed reading - the concept of "vocalization".

As you're reading this right now, I'll bet you're silently talking to yourself, "vocalizing" the words as you read them.

And that's what slows you down.

The secret to reading faster is to remove that inner voice.

I know it sounds hard, but it isn't. With a little practice you'll certainly be reading everything twice as fast, and - unlike many of the gimmicky courses - you'll maintain this new speed forever.

Check out Dr Sheperd's course here.
STEP #5

Memorize Anything With This One Technique

Meet "Mr Memory".

Before the show, he was quickly introduced to each member of the audience - all 250 of them. Now they're all standing up and he's going to point to them, call out their name, and tell them to sit down.

10 minutes later and no one is left standing. Mr Memory has remembered every single name. Perfectly.

It's an impressive skill. And although memory masters use a variety of mental techniques, there is one concept at the root of everything:

Association.

All memory works by association - the process of making mental connections.

When you find something "hard to remember", it's simply because you haven't made strong enough connections in your mind. This lesson will show you how to overcome that.

Creating Memories

If I asked you what happened a week last Tuesday, I doubt if you'd be able to tell me. Unless of course that was when the UFO landed on your house, in which case it's a day you'd never forget!

And that's the point about memory...

To make something memorable, it has to stand out in your mind. You do this by using exaggeration, or what I call the power of OUTRAGEOUS ASSOCIATION.

Let's look at some examples to see the process in action...

Example 1 - Remembering Names

Let's assume you have a work colleague whose name you can never remember. (She's called Sharon.)
Okay, take the name and associate it with something else. What does "Sharon" conjure up for you? What's the first thing you naturally connect it with? (It can be an image or a sound.)

For me, it's the Israeli Prime Minister, Aerial Sharon.

So I imagine Mr Sharon and my work colleague Sharon sitting giving a press conference, fighting with each other, and Sharon hitting him over the head with her computer. Mr Sharon is shouting at her... "Sharon, Sharon... stop this now...!"

What you're doing here is taking the thing you don't know (in this case the name) and connecting it to something you do know (in this case the Israeli Prime Minister) and then bringing those two entities together to form a mental movie.

Try to use all your senses when you do this. You use sight as you picture the scene in your mind. You also use sound as you hear the words and noises. If you can use scent, taste, and touch as well, so much the better.

And very importantly, you must use movement. Movement always attracts attention in the mind, and so your scene becomes easier to recall. You're not creating a still picture here - it's an animation.

The most important point is to make it as crazy as possible, so that it sticks out in your mind.

And do what comes naturally - to you.

For example, when hearing the name "Sharon" your first thought might have been "sharing". Fine. In that case you might imagine walking around with a trayful of Sharons at the next business meeting, and SHARING them out with everyone present. Hear everyone thanking you for sharing them with us.

If this technique sounds almost insane, it should. It's not crazy, just creative. By using a whole-brained approach, you'll make remembering easier and more natural.

Do this and I doubt if you'll ever forget Sharon's name as long as you live.

Example 2 - Foreign Words

The Spanish word 'mostrar' means 'to show'.

There's no obvious logical connection between the English and Spanish words, so let's just invent one...

Look at the word again. Listen to it.
'Mostrar'

What association do you make in English?

For me, I think of "mousetrap".

(The connection doesn't have to be particularly strong or obvious. Just use whatever comes into your mind.)

As I've chosen 'mousetrap', I would imagine a giant mouse inviting me into his home behind the mouse hole, and SHOWING me all the mousetraps he has inside.

(Perhaps he's hidden them from the humans to keep his fellow mice safe.)

As we walk around, I ask him to SHOW me more mousetraps. So he beckons me to come in deeper, where he SHOWS me a stage, where a bunch of mousetraps are putting on a SHOW,

(Yes, it's 'The Mousetrap' by Agatha Christie.)

Crazy? Yes.

Memorable? You bet!

Memory and Repetition

Once you've made an association in your mind, you need to cement it into your longer-term memory. The tool for that job is repetition.

Psychologists have discovered that we recall more of what we've learned when we undertake periodic review sessions.

So simply replay your "memory movie" a few minutes after you create it. Then repeat it periodically.

Here's the recommended viewing schedule:

- Create the movie
- Repeat immediately
- Repeat 10 minutes later
- Repeat 1 hour later
- Repeat next day
- Repeat a week later
- Repeat a month later

By this time, the connection will be so firmly lodged in your memory you'll recall it instantly.
Yes, repetition truly is the mother of learning.

**Memory Summary**

To remember anything, use the AVR technique:

Associate - Visualize - Repeat.

(You can remember this by calling it the AViatoR technique. Imagine a pilot flying a huge brain across the sky. Or an aviator flying a hot air balloon in the shape of a brain. Simple, huh?)

Although this technique sounds complicated, I assure you it's not. With a little practice you can remember anything within seconds. Now isn't that worth a bit of effort?

**Action Point:**

Here's a great exercise for improving your memory, building a powerful vocabulary, and increasing your powers of communication.

Start collecting words. Get them from a dictionary, from the news, from other people, or from your everyday reading. They can be English words, or foreign ones if you're learning a new language.

You can choose any number of words you want, but I'd recommend 3 a day as a good starting point.

Now use the AVR technique to remember them.

Set up a words file on your computer. Call it words.txt and simply add 3 words to it every day. Include the date so you know when to do your repetitions.

Most people do not learn a single new word a year.

In a month you'll know 90 new words...

In a year you'll know a staggering 1095!
STEP #6

Tame That Monkey Mind

Have you ever watched a monkey at the zoo?

The creature can't sit still.

It picks up a stick, throws it away, runs off, jumps around, grabs a swing, returns to annoy another monkey, picks up some fruit, throws it away, runs off again...

The monkey can't concentrate on anything for more than a few seconds.

Unfortunately as human beings, we inherited this "monkey mind" as we evolved from our closest ancestors.

I mean, think about it. Even as you read this, your mind is jumping around, ready to run at the first opportunity.

Frantic thinking is a mental disease of our fast-paced, ever-demanding, modern world.

At the same time, we have more distractions than ever before. Never mind the swing and the banana. We've got gadgets galore nowadays!

What does all this add up to?

Stress.

"So much to do, so little time to do any of it."

Or so you may have thought...

You see, there IS a way of getting everything done, doing it to the very best of your ability (which is much higher than you realize), and still have loads of time to play.

Interested?

Good. Welcome to today's key mental skill:

Concentration.

Single-minded attentiveness is a critical skill in achieving anything worthwhile.

As Lord Chesterfield once said:
“There is time enough for everything in the course of the day if you will do one thing at once, but there is not time enough in the year if you will do two things at once.”

Being able to focus exclusively on one thing at a time is essential.

If you can’t focus on a task for a sustained period of time, you’ll never complete it. Or you’ll complete it... but the result will be way below what it could have been.

You’ve got to focus.

Now you might think that concentration requires extreme mental effort and a high level of “motivation”.

It doesn’t.

Concentration is a completely natural state of mind.

You’ve already experienced this state of mind many times, while being engrossed in a TV program. Your mind was drifting along, following the story completely naturally and without effort.

This natural state is called "being in the zone". The zone is a wonderful place of calm, peaceful effectiveness.

And when you enter the zone, you can work wonders.

- "Hard" tasks become easy.
- You eliminate procrastination.
- You learn anything faster and more completely.
- You save time by finishing things quicker.
- You feel less stressed out, increasing your confidence.
- Your relationships improve because you give others your undivided attention.

Quite simply, when you learn to focus, nothing can stand in your way.

Now the big question is, how DO you get into the zone and trigger that natural state of attentiveness and calm?

In the past, I would have recommended meditation.

Regular meditation helps you feel calmer, improves your focus, and eliminates the mental chatter that interferes with your ability to fully concentrate.
The problem with mediation however, is it takes so long to learn. You're looking at months, or more likely years, before you really experience the acclaimed state of 'mindfulness'.

Okay if you've got the time. However, there is now an alternative...

With all the advances in brain research and cognitive psychology in recent years, a new method has emerged.

Scientific researchers have identified the specific part of the brain that deals with concentration.

This discovery has been a major breakthrough and it's allowed new techniques to be developed that invoke rapid improvements in concentration based on how the brain naturally works.

One of the leading experts in this field is Gardar Gardarsson.

His 'Improving Concentration' course is the very best resource available today for developing your concentration.

In particular, his "thought stopping" technique is simply brilliant. I now use this every time I sit down to work.

If you have trouble concentrating, I'd highly recommend you take a look at this course and read for yourself the fascinating story behind it.

You can get more information about Gardar's concentration course here.
STEP #7
The Greatest Success Secret of All Time

The final mental skill is the easiest to explain... and the hardest to apply.

Here it is eloquently described by a former U.S. President:

"Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence.

Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent.

Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb.

Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts.

Persistence and determination are omnipotent. The slogan 'press on' has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race.

--Calvin Coolidge

No one has ever said it better.

And yet the question remains, how DO you persist with something?

Is it just down to sheer will power and gritted teeth in the face of adversity, or are there specific techniques you can use to help you "keep on keeping on"?

Well if you're looking for the 'secret' to persistence, you won't find it. You just have to accept that life will put obstacles in your path. There's no getting away from that.

Ultimately, persistence is all down to desire. If you want something badly enough, you'll get it - eventually.

However I'm going to leave you with a single technique that I've found extremely effective in helping me move towards goals and eventually achieve them.

Here it is in three words:
"Do something daily".

I'm currently learning to speak Spanish, and so I give myself daily exposure to the language. Every single day I listen to an audio cassette or read some Spanish. I aim for half an hour a day. As a result, I'm learning it!

In this instant, push-button world, everyone seems to want everything immediately. Well success just doesn't happen that way.

Take your goal step-by-step, every single day, and you'll get there before you know it.

That's enough lecturing from me. I hope you've enjoyed the course. If you've learned one thing from it, then it's been worthwhile.

Keep learning, keep reading, and keep going.

Every single day.

I wish you every success in life!

Best regards,

Murdo Macleod

About The Author

Murdo Macleod is a software developer and digital publisher.

Among his latest projects, he is co-author of an incredible new ebook that teaches kids and adults how to perform lightning-fast mental calculation... even if they failed math in school!

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