NOVEMBER / DECEMBER ISSUE 2026

Adlington Life

However you celebrate, make it a season to enjoy.



Hosting without the hassle

The little things that feel festive

The art of wintering well



Welcome

The festive period can give us plenty to look forward to. Whether it's catching up with friends and family, enjoying familiar traditions or finding time for relaxation, there's something special about this time of year.

For our festive edition of Adlington Life, we've brought together a collection of stories and ideas to enjoy over the coming weeks. We hear from homeowners about their Christmas celebrations, discover some surprising stories behind festive traditions and explore a few ways to make the most of the winter months.

I hope you'll find something in these pages that makes you smile, brings back a happy memory or inspires you to try something new.

Wishing you a very happy Christmas and all the best for the New Year.



Dr Ed Gladman
Chief Executive Officer

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ADLINGTON
RETIREMENT LIVING

November & December



November

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08 Remembrance Sunday
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December

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Join us for an event near you

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04 In which year was Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol first published?

05 Which country donates the Christmas tree displayed in Trafalgar Square in London each year?

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07 Who composed the music for the ballet The Nutcracker?

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09 Why does freshly fallen snow often appear white even though ice itself is transparent?

10 What is the Scottish name for New Year's Eve celebrations and festivities?

ANSWERS ON PAGE 13







The art of wintering well

The Nordic nations know a thing or two about winter. With long, dark nights and temperatures regularly dipping below freezing, they certainly get plenty of practice.

Instead of counting down the days until spring, Denmark, Norway and Sweden have each found ways to embrace the darker months, with a few ideas that might be worth borrowing.







Hygge

First up is hygge, a Danish idea that's all about slowing down, feeling comfortable and enjoying life's simple pleasures, whether that's spending time with people you love or settling down with a good book, favourite music or a film.

The idea became popular in the UK a few years ago, although somewhere along the way we focused on the candles, blankets and very expensive knitwear. There's more to hygge than that.

At The Sidings in Lytham, Trevor has embraced the idea without necessarily giving it a Danish name. A lifelong opera fan, he has discovered that he can now enjoy it online.

"I can get a lot of opera on YouTube now on the television. It's amazing! I can go onto YouTube music and find almost all the operas or favourite singers that I like. Also, I love piano music and you can get a lot of piano music on there."

He has also started playing chess again after a break of around 40 years, alongside neighbours ranging from experienced players to complete beginners.



Fika

Then there's Sweden, and the Nordic habit that we can all embrace: fika.

It's often translated as a coffee and cake break, but there's more to it than that. Fika is about deliberately stopping what you're doing, sitting down and spending a little time with other people.

It's an idea that feels very familiar in Adlington's coffee lounges, where homeowners often describe sitting down for a coffee and finding that other people gradually join them.

At The Sidings, Ann describes much the same thing: "If anybody wants to chat, they go and sit in the coffee lounge and invariably, the crowd will gather."

Something sweet traditionally comes with fika too. Frank at Brookfields House in Newcastle-under-Lyme enjoys baking and often shares what he makes with friends and the team. He's made everything from cakes to cheese scones, although perfecting one favourite took a little perseverance.

"It took me three attempts to perfect a lemon drizzle cake," he says.



Friluftsliv

But a good winter isn't all about staying in. Norway offers friluftsliv, which roughly translates as "open air life" and celebrates spending time outdoors throughout the seasons.

Thankfully, you don't need to scale a mountain or plunge into an icy fjord. Winter has its own rewards closer to home: clear blue skies, low sunshine, frosty gardens and the unmistakable freshness of a cold, bright day. Even a short walk can feel good, particularly when there's somewhere warm to come back to afterwards.

There will inevitably be days when horizontal rain makes the Norwegian approach less tempting. Ann, who lives at The Sidings, has found one way around that. She enjoys a weekly movement with music class in the activity studio.

"It's good having it in the same building because in winter, the bad weather can put you off," she says. "But if it's here, you've only got to pop downstairs."

So perhaps the Nordic secret to winter isn't particularly complicated after all. Enjoy the bright days outdoors and make the most of the darker ones too. Spend time doing things you enjoy, stop for coffee and conversation and, if there's a slice of lemon drizzle cake to share, so much the better.



Lottie's Christmas List

Lottie Gold was writing her Christmas list.

It was going extremely well.

She had already filled most of one side of the paper with things she wanted, including a new jumper, some trainers, a game, three books and something Mum had described as "far too expensive".

Lottie had put a star next to that one.

She was spending the afternoon with Grandma at her new retirement community, where Grandma had moved earlier in the year. Christmas decorations were beginning to appear and there was a box of baubles waiting to be unpacked beside the tree.

"How long is that list?" Grandma asked.

"Not too long."

Grandma raised an eyebrow.

"And not too short," Lottie added.

"Just right?"

"Exactly."

Grandma smiled. Lottie had always been rather particular about things being just right.

Lottie turned over the paper.

"What's on your Christmas list, Grandma?"

"My Christmas list?"

"Yes. What do you want?"

Grandma thought about it.

"I'd like to have lunch with people I like."

Lottie waited.

"And?"

"And perhaps go somewhere nice."

"And?"

"I'd like to get dressed up for a Christmas party."

Lottie frowned.

"You're not very good at this."

"I thought I was doing rather well."

"You're supposed to say things."

"Ah."

Grandma gave the matter some more thought.

"I wouldn't mind a new bottle of perfume."

Lottie brightened.

"Good. What else?"

"A really good box of chocolates."

"Now you're getting it."

"And I'd quite like you to come and help me decorate the tree."

"That isn't a present."

"It is to me."

Lottie wasn't convinced.

She looked at her own list. Almost everything on it could be put in a box, wrapped in paper and left under the tree.

Grandma's list was much stranger.

"Do you want anything else?"

"I'd like a walk on a cold, sunny morning. I'd like to watch an old film I've seen at least 20 times. I'd like somebody else to cook Christmas lunch. And I'd like plenty of time to read my new book."

"You haven't got a new book."

"I'm hoping somebody will buy me one."

Lottie nodded approvingly.

At last, Grandma seemed to be getting the hang of Christmas lists.

Then she had an idea.

She took another sheet of paper and wrote:

Grandma's Christmas List

One bottle of perfume. Something nice.

One box of very good chocolates, definitely not to be opened before Christmas. Probably.

One new book. Lottie could choose this.

One Christmas party.

One lunch with people she likes.

One cold and sunny walk.

One very old film.

One afternoon decorating the tree with Lottie.







Lottie read it back.

"That's quite a lot."

"I told you I was good at Christmas lists."

Lottie looked at her own list again.

At the bottom, underneath the trainers and the books and the thing that was far too expensive, she added:

Come and see Grandma at Christmas.

Then, after a moment, she added:

Eat some of Grandma's chocolates.

Grandma peered over her shoulder.

"I saw that."

Lottie put a star next to it anyway.

The greatest gifts are often the simplest; quality time with loved ones, and more freedom to enjoy the things you love. Discover how Adlington Retirement Living can help you make more of every day.



Who Invented Christmas Crackers?

Paper crowns, terrible jokes and tiny gifts of questionable usefulness: Christmas crackers have been part of our festive celebrations for generations.

We have Victorian confectioner Tom Smith to thank for it.

After discovering French bonbons, sugared almonds wrapped in twisted tissue paper, on a trip to Paris, Smith began selling his own version in London. He added little love messages inside and then came up with the idea that transformed them.

According to the story, the crackle of a log on the fire inspired Smith to find a way to make his sweets go bang when their wrappers were pulled apart. He patented an early cracker device in 1847 and continued perfecting it over the following years. His son Walter later added elaborate paper hats, while the little gifts inside became increasingly inventive.

By the 1920s, crackers were firmly established as part of Christmas celebrations, with designs inspired by everything from jazz and motorcars to Charlie Chaplin.

Nearly two centuries later, the paper hats, terrible jokes and tiny gifts are still going strong, but there is one modern twist. Bang free crackers are now available for pets with noise sensitive ears, proving that even a Christmas tradition almost 200 years old can move with the times.









Adlington Guest Suite

HOSTING WITHOUT THE HASSLE

Having people over is one of the pleasures of the festive season. Finding somewhere for everybody to sleep, planning the meals, doing the shopping and tackling the washing up afterwards can be rather less appealing.

For homeowners at Adlington communities, having friends and family to visit doesn't necessarily mean taking all of that on themselves.

Ann and Harry at The Sidings in Lytham have certainly found that moving hasn't put a stop to entertaining.

"We've had more visitors since we moved here than ever before."

Friends and family are regular visitors, and the guest suite has come in particularly handy when people want to stay over.

"They all loved staying in the guest suite," Ann added.

It's a similar story for Margaret and Keith at The Spindles in Menston.

"It's amazing how popular we've become with friends visiting since we moved here. They come and have lunch with us in the restaurant. Once they've sampled the meals, they want to come again."

"We're entertaining more than we ever did when we lived in our bungalow," added Keith.

Having a restaurant on the doorstep means lunch with friends doesn't have to begin with a shopping list or end with a sink full of dishes. Keith has even had friends come over to enjoy breakfast together, while overnight visitors can stay in the guest suite.

Of course, you can still do as much or as little of the hosting as you like. Make your favourite festive treats, open something fizzy, put the kettle on or invite everybody round for a catch-up before heading downstairs for lunch.

And if you do fancy producing something homemade, the gingerbread mince pies on this page might be a very good place to start.



Gingerbread mince pies

Makes: 12 | Prep: 30 mins + chilling
Bake: 18–22 mins

INGREDIENTS

Pastry - 250g plain flour, 100g cold butter (cubed), 75g light brown sugar, 1 tsp ground ginger, ½ tsp cinnamon, ¼ tsp nutmeg, 1 tbsp golden syrup, 1 egg yolk, pinch of salt, 1–2 tbsp cold water, if needed

Filling - 300g mincemeat, 1 small apple (finely diced),1 tbsp orange juice, 1 tsp orange zest, 1 tbsp brandy, optional

To finish - 1 beaten egg, icing sugar

METHOD

Make the pastry: Rub butter into the flour, sugar, spices and salt until crumbly. Mix in golden syrup and egg yolk, adding water if needed. Bring together, wrap and chill for 30 minutes.

Prepare filling: Mix mincemeat with apple, orange juice, zest and brandy.

Assemble: Heat oven to 180°C / 160°C fan. Roll out two-thirds of the pastry to 3–4mm thick and cut 12 rounds. Press into a greased muffin tin and fill with mincemeat.

Star tops: Roll out remaining pastry and cut 12 stars. Place on the pies and brush with beaten egg.

Bake: Bake for 18–22 minutes, until golden. Cool for 5 minutes, then transfer to a rack and dust with icing sugar.

Festive cheer AT OUR COMMUNITIES

From festive parties and seasonal treats to cosy get-togethers and Christmas cheer, there's plenty to enjoy at Adlington. It's the perfect time to make new friends, share special moments and discover the joy of community living.

Turn to the back page to discover festive events happening near you.



















The little things that feel festive

Christmas has a habit of arriving before many of us are ready for it.

The Halloween costumes have barely disappeared before the shops are filling with baubles, the Christmas adverts are on television and somebody inevitably asks whether you've started your shopping yet.

For a while, the response can be: Already?

Then something changes. Plans go in the diary, favourite annual outings come around again and the things that seemed ridiculously early suddenly feel rather welcome.

So what makes the festive season feel as though it has really begun for you?

Saturday nights start to sparkle

For some of us, autumn and early winter wouldn't be quite the same without Strictly Come Dancing.

As the competition progresses, the evenings get darker and somehow the sequins, scores and increasingly ambitious dances become part of the seasonal countdown.

Your television marker may be something completely different. The point is that there's something you look forward to returning.



The annual shopping trip

Plenty of Christmas shopping can be done from the sofa, but the traditional shopping trip hasn't disappeared.

For some, it's become an occasion in itself: a favourite city, good company, somewhere for lunch and possibly rather more chatting than shopping.

You might come home with all the presents. Or one present and a very nice day out.



The curtain goes up

A Christmas Carol. A musical. The ballet. A family show. Or that gloriously British festive institution, the pantomime.

Perhaps you're in the audience, or maybe you're learning lines, rehearsing songs, singing with a choir or getting ready to take to the stage yourself.

Depending on your choice, there may also be the annual satisfaction of shouting advice at a fully grown adult who appears unable to see the person standing immediately behind them.

The lights go on

Perhaps you head to the local switch-on or book tickets for a spectacular light trail. Or perhaps you simply notice one evening that the streets and houses around you have started to glow.

Even familiar places look different under thousands of tiny lights.

An old favourite comes back

Some stories seem to belong to this time of year.

It might be a film you know almost word for word, a favourite book or a piece of music you return to every December.

The story hasn't changed. Perhaps that's precisely why we like coming back to it.



You make something

A table covered with greenery, ribbons and wire. Hot drinks nearby. Several friends absolutely confident that making a wreath will be easy.

An hour later, everyone has produced something completely different.

Whether the finished result looks quite like the demonstration is almost beside the point.

Somewhere familiar gets dressed up

Stately homes, gardens and historic houses can be transformed at this time of year, with enormous trees, decorated rooms, lights and displays.

Seeing a favourite place reinvented for the season can be reason enough to make another visit.

Tea and cake afterwards may also play a part.

The date everyone can actually manage

It may have involved 47 messages and the rejection of every Friday and Saturday in December, but eventually it happens.

The friends' lunch. The family get-together. Drinks with former colleagues. The annual meal with people you never manage to see often enough.

The date goes into the diary.

Or perhaps you head for the sun

Not everyone's ideal December involves scarves and illuminated reindeer.

For some, the annual tradition is precisely the opposite: pack a suitcase, find some sunshine and spend part of the British winter somewhere considerably warmer.

When does it start for you?

Perhaps it's Strictly, a theatre trip, an annual day out, meeting friends or seeing the first Christmas lights. Or perhaps it's something completely different.

The shops may have been ready since Halloween. The lovely part is that the rest of us get to decide when we are.



Why do festive scents bring back so many memories?

Cinnamon. Pine needles. A roast in the oven. A freshly peeled satsuma. Woodsmoke. A particular perfume. Even the unmistakable whiff of a blown-out candle.

The festive season has its own collection of scents. But the interesting thing is that yours might be completely different from somebody else's.

One familiar smell can suddenly bring back a childhood Christmas, a particular person or a place you haven't thought about for years.

So why is our sense of smell so good at bringing memories rushing back?

A shortcut to our memories

Smell has a particularly close relationship with the parts of the brain involved in memory and emotion.

Unlike some of our other senses, information about smells have very direct connections with areas including the amygdala, which helps process emotion, and the hippocampus, which plays an important role in memory.

That helps explain why a familiar scent can sometimes produce such an immediate reaction. You might recognise the feeling before you've even worked out what the smell reminds you of.

Why festive scents stick

This time of year is particularly good at creating these associations because so many of its sights, tastes and smells return year after year.

Perhaps your family always had a real tree. You might associate December with a fire crackling in the grate, something always served with Christmas dinner or the smell of a favourite winter drink.

When the same scent crops up as part of the same occasion year after year, the association can become surprisingly strong. Encounter it again much later, somewhere completely unexpected, and the memories can come flooding back.

Why food plays such a big part

When we eat, aromas travel from the mouth up towards the nose, contributing enormously to what we experience as flavour.

It's why the smell of something cooking can make us anticipate its taste before it reaches the table, and why favourite foods can create such strong associations.

There is no official smell of Christmas

The scents you remember might surprise you.

Some of our most powerful scent memories may have nothing conventionally festive about them. Furniture polish. A particular soap. Cold air when you step outside. The smell inside a much-loved old car on the journey to visit somebody.

None of those would appear on a Christmas candle, but that doesn't make the association any less powerful. Sometimes we don't even realise we've made the connection until we encounter that scent again.

Can we make new scent memories?

Scent memories aren't all formed in childhood. New experiences can create new associations too. Perhaps it's your first Christmas in a new home, a holiday somewhere warm, a recipe you've recently discovered or somewhere you now visit every December.

Something you smell for the first time this festive season could become part of the celebrations for years to come. One day, you may encounter it again and remember exactly where you were.

The Folklore hiding in our festive greenery

Holly, ivy and mistletoe have been part of midwinter celebrations for centuries. But behind the familiar festive greenery lies a surprisingly colourful collection of stories, symbols and superstitions.

Holly

Evergreen holly, with its splash of bright red berries in the depths of winter, has long been associated with life and protection. The Romans used it during their midwinter festival of Saturnalia, while later folklore suggested that planting a holly tree near your home could protect it from lightning and evil spirits. Cutting down a whole holly tree, however, was said to bring bad luck.

Ivy

Ivy has an especially colourful past. The ancient Greeks and Romans associated it with Dionysus or Bacchus, the god of wine. Ivy was often depicted in celebrations of the god and, rather optimistically, wearing a crown of ivy was once thought to prevent drunkenness.

Mistletoe

Mistletoe has been associated with everything from fertility and good fortune to peace and protection. Exactly how it became linked with kissing is less clear, but by the late 18th century the custom was being recorded in England. One tradition allowed a berry to be plucked for every kiss, with the kissing stopping once they were all gone.

So next time you hang a wreath, spare a thought for the centuries of stories, superstitions and traditions tangled up in all that greenery.

QUIZ ANSWERS - 01 Germany | **02** Paris
03 Chionophobia | **04** 1843 | **05** Norway
06 Kiribati | **07** Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
08 12 grapes | **09** Snow's ice crystals scatter light, making it appear white | **10** Hogmanay

LOOK UP! WINTER SKIES

Long winter nights have one rather lovely advantage: more time to look at the stars. And this winter, there are a few particularly good reasons to look up.

You don't need a telescope or any specialist knowledge. On a clear night, find somewhere away from bright lights, give your eyes a little time to adjust and see what you can spot.

A CHRISTMAS EVE SUPERMOON

There's an extra reason to look up on Christmas Eve this year. The full Moon on 24th December 2026 will also be a supermoon, appearing slightly bigger and brighter than usual. Look towards the eastern horizon as the Moon begins to rise around sunset.

FIND ORION

One of the easiest winter constellations to recognise is Orion. Start by looking for three bright stars in a short, straight line. That's Orion's Belt. Once you've found those, you're well on your way to picking out the rest of the constellation.

WISH UPON A SHOOTING STAR

The Geminid meteor shower is expected to peak on 14th December 2026. If skies are clear, you could see bright streaks of light as tiny pieces of space debris burn up in the Earth's atmosphere.

So wrap up warm, step outside and remember to look up. Some of winter's loveliest sights are happening overhead.

However you do Christmas

Christmas looks different for everyone. It might mean a house full of family, presents and plenty of laughter, or something much quieter: a favourite film, a winter walk, a really good book or the freedom to spend the day exactly as you choose.

For homeowners across Adlington Retirement Living communities, moving home hasn't meant leaving behind the people, memories and traditions that make Christmas special. It has also brought new friendships and new ways to celebrate.



A change of plan

Last Christmas was a little different for Sandra and Graham at The Newells in Kempston.



For the first time, they didn't go to their daughter's home on Christmas Day. She had been working on Christmas Eve and wasn't planning to get up the next morning and cook a roast dinner, so Sandra and Graham decided to stay at The Newells instead.

"We stayed here and had a lovely Christmas dinner, and my daughter came round later with a bottle of wine," Sandra recalled.

"And sat in the lounge with us having a mince pie and a drink."

Both of their daughters live in Kempston and, whereas the journey to their previous home in Bedford could take an hour in traffic, they can now walk round to see them.

The traditions that come with us

For Hilary at Radford House in Exeter, Christmas has always been closely tied to family, church and music. Over the years, there were midnight masses, carol services and Christmas concerts, while Boxing Day brought its own traditions, including her mother's apple pie.

Hilary spent her first Christmas after moving to Radford House with family. She had only lived in her new apartment for around a month, and it was the first time she had been away.

"I got out of the taxi when I came back and I thought, 'I'm coming home. This is my home.' That's genuinely what it felt like."

Taking centre stage

Christmas doesn't begin and end with Christmas Day.

At The Sidings in Lytham, Dot enjoys the themed events and Christmas parties, and sometimes adds something of her own to the festivities.

"One Christmas, my exercise class performed a routine I choreographed - it was such fun! I'm always thinking of new routines for the group."



Rhythmic exercise has been a big part of Dot's life for many years, and she has continued that interest since moving to The Sidings, including putting her choreography skills to festive use.

A starring role

Sue at The Woodlands in Heaton Mersey has also discovered that December can become rather busy.

"We've had an Italian evening and parties for New Year's Eve and Christmas... people think I'm having a very wild social life."



One December brought an unexpected starring role when The Woodlands drama group staged Babes in the Wood. Around 15 homeowners took part, raising money for charity, and Sue found herself playing Sleeping Beauty.

Letting somebody else do the cooking

Sheila had only been living at Radford House for a few weeks when her first Christmas there came around. Her daughter and son-in-law joined her for Christmas dinner in the restaurant.



"I just sat and ate it, and there was no washing up afterwards. It was amazing. I loved it."



When she told her son about the day, his response was immediate: "I'm coming this year."

There are some traditions Sheila wouldn't want to change, though. "It wouldn't be the same without a tree," she said.

Christmas was always a special time for Sheila and her husband Steve, whose birthday was on 17 December. Their decorations went up early and their tree was an impressive nine feet tall.

"He absolutely loved Christmas," Sheila said. Since Steve passed away, those memories remain an important part of the season.

"Some people might want to push those memories to the back of their minds, but I feel it's a special time. I always think, 'He'd be getting really excited by now.'"

This Christmas both of Sheila's children will be joining her for Christmas dinner at Radford House.



However you do Christmas

Christmas changes over the years. There are traditions we wouldn't dream of giving up, others we happily leave behind, and new ones that arrive when we least expect them.

Your Christmas might look nothing like anybody else's. It could be busy or peaceful, full of people or happily spent in your own company. You might do exactly what you've done for years, change the plan completely or keep the bits you love and dispense with the rest.

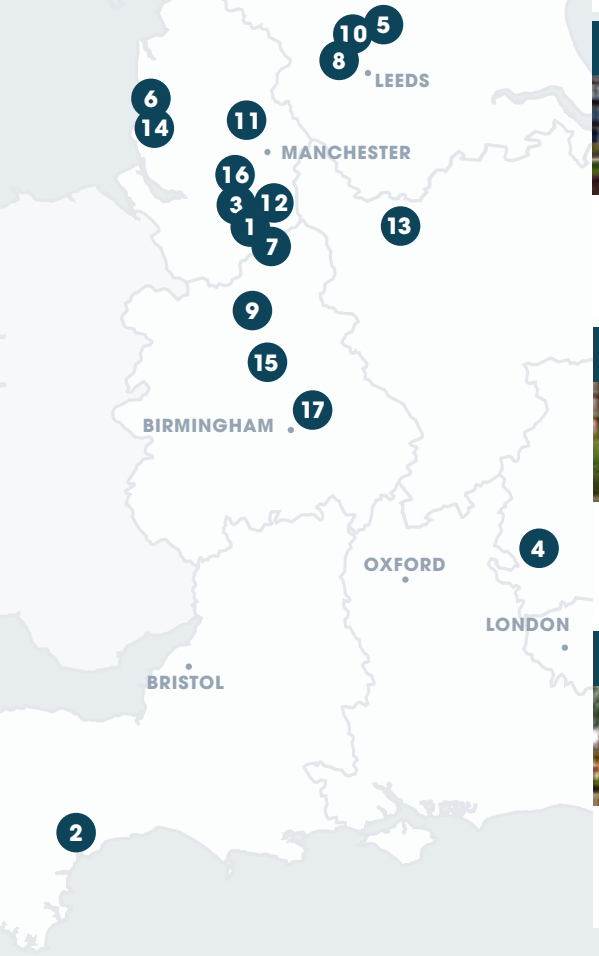
The things that make Christmas feel like Christmas have always been personal. Moving home doesn't have to change that. It can bring familiar traditions into a new home, make room for new ones and, perhaps, mean that somebody else does the washing up.

Join us for one of our winter events. Turn to the back page for more information.

Retirement Living Apartments

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