




## THE INCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH ADHD IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

### A INCLUSÃO DE CRIANÇAS COM TDAH NA EDUCAÇÃO INFANTIL

### LA INCLUSIÓN DE NIÑOS CON TDAH EN LA EDUCACIÓN INFANTIL

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#### ABSTRACT

This article addresses the inclusion of children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in Early Childhood Education, highlighting the challenges and potential of this process. Through a literature review, we analyzed the current conditions of pedagogical practice, teacher training, school environment organization, relationships with families, and public policies related to inclusion. The results indicate that, despite legal support, the effective implementation of inclusion still faces significant obstacles, especially regarding teacher preparation and the structure of educational institutions. Initial and ongoing teacher training is highlighted as essential for understanding the characteristics of ADHD and for adopting differentiated pedagogical strategies that promote children's learning and participation. Furthermore, curricular flexibility, the use of playful and technological resources, as well as the creation of a welcoming and predictable environment, are factors that contribute to the development of these students' potential. The connection between school, family, and multidisciplinary professionals emerges as an essential element in promoting comprehensive support for children with ADHD. It also highlights the importance of combating stigma and misinformation, which still permeate the school environment, hindering full inclusion. Finally, the study concludes that the inclusion of children with ADHD in early childhood education requires a collective and ongoing commitment, involving cultural change, investment in training and infrastructure, and the recognition of diversity as a central principle of education. This way, it is possible to build more fair and equitable educational practices that respect the uniqueness of each child.

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**Keywords:** Inclusion. Early Childhood Education. ADHD. Teacher Training. Curricular Flexibility.

## RESUMO

Este artigo aborda a inclusão de crianças com Transtorno de Déficit de Atenção e Hiperatividade (TDAH) na Educação Infantil, destacando os desafios e as potencialidades presentes nesse processo. Por meio de uma revisão bibliográfica, foram analisadas as condições atuais da prática pedagógica, a formação dos professores, a organização do ambiente escolar, a relação com as famílias e as políticas públicas relacionadas à inclusão. Os resultados indicam que, apesar do respaldo legal, a implementação efetiva da inclusão ainda encontra obstáculos significativos, especialmente no que se refere à preparação docente e à estrutura das instituições educacionais. A formação inicial e continuada dos educadores é apontada como fundamental para a compreensão das características do TDAH e para a adoção de estratégias pedagógicas diferenciadas, que favoreçam a aprendizagem e a participação das crianças. Além disso, a flexibilização curricular, a utilização de recursos lúdicos e tecnológicos, bem como a construção de um ambiente acolhedor e previsível, são fatores que contribuem para o desenvolvimento das potencialidades desses alunos. A articulação entre escola, família e profissionais multidisciplinares emerge como elemento essencial para a promoção do suporte integral às crianças com TDAH. Destaca-se também a importância do combate ao estigma e à desinformação, que ainda permeiam o ambiente escolar, dificultando a inclusão plena. Por fim, o estudo conclui que a inclusão de crianças com TDAH na Educação Infantil demanda um compromisso coletivo e contínuo, que envolva mudança cultural, investimentos em formação e infraestrutura, além do reconhecimento da diversidade como princípio central da educação. Dessa forma, é possível construir práticas educativas mais justas, equitativas e capazes de respeitar as singularidades de cada criança.

**Palavras-chave:** Inclusão. Educação Infantil. TDAH. Formação Docente. Flexibilização Curricular.

## RESUMEN

Este artículo aborda la inclusión de niños con Trastorno por Déficit de Atención e Hiperactividad (TDAH) en Educación Infantil, destacando los desafíos y el potencial de este proceso. A través de una revisión bibliográfica, analizamos las condiciones actuales de la práctica pedagógica, la formación docente, la organización del entorno escolar, las relaciones con las familias y las políticas públicas relacionadas con la inclusión. Los resultados indican que, a pesar del apoyo legal, la implementación efectiva de la inclusión aún enfrenta obstáculos significativos, especialmente en la formación docente y la estructura de las instituciones educativas. La formación docente, tanto inicial como continua, se destaca como esencial para comprender las características del TDAH y para adoptar estrategias pedagógicas diferenciadas que promuevan el aprendizaje y la participación de los niños. Además, la flexibilidad curricular, el uso de recursos lúdicos y tecnológicos, así como la creación de un entorno acogedor y predecible, son factores que contribuyen al desarrollo del potencial de estos estudiantes. La conexión entre la escuela, la familia y los profesionales multidisciplinares surge como un elemento esencial para promover el apoyo integral a los niños con TDAH. También destaca la importancia de combatir el estigma y la desinformación, que aún permean el entorno escolar y dificultan la plena inclusión. Finalmente, el estudio concluye que la inclusión de niños con TDAH en la educación infantil temprana requiere un compromiso colectivo y continuo,



que implica un cambio cultural, inversión en formación e infraestructura, y el reconocimiento de la diversidad como principio central de la educación. De esta manera, es posible construir prácticas educativas más justas y equitativas que respeten la singularidad de cada niño.

**Palabras clave:** Inclusión. Educación Infantil. TDAH. Formación del Profesorado. Flexibilidad Curricular.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

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Early Childhood Education represents the formative basis of human development, being the first institutional space that welcomes children in their learning and socialization processes. In this environment, it is essential to ensure that all children, regardless of their specific characteristics or needs, are assured of the right to quality education. Among the challenges faced by educational institutions, the inclusion of children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) stands out, whose presence in classrooms demands careful attention, appropriate pedagogical strategies and a sensitive look at the uniqueness of each student.

ADHD is a neurobiological disorder that affects behavior and school performance, mainly due to the difficulty in maintaining attention, controlling impulses, and regulating the level of motor activity. In Early Childhood Education, this set of characteristics can often be interpreted as inappropriate behavior, excessive agitation or lack of interest in the proposed activities.

However, understanding the manifestations of the disorder from an inclusive perspective is essential to break with stigmatizing views and promote pedagogical practices that respect the rhythm and needs of children with ADHD, strengthening their self-esteem and encouraging their active participation in the educational process.

By considering inclusion as a guiding principle of pedagogical practice, it is necessary to rethink the forms of organization of the school space, the methodologies applied and the role of educators and managers in welcoming diversity. The child with ADHD should not be seen as a problem to be contained, but as a developing subject who requires listening, empathy and interventions planned with pedagogical intentionality.

Thus, the school must become a flexible environment, capable of offering multiple possibilities of expression, movement and construction of knowledge, recognizing the value of differences as potentiators of the teaching-learning process.

The challenge of including children with ADHD is not restricted to the domain of pedagogical strategies; It also permeates the field of attitudes, beliefs and affective dispositions of education professionals. It is necessary, therefore, to develop an institutional culture based on welcoming, cooperation and valuing the child in its entirety.

This implies training teachers who know how to deal with atypical behaviors, who understand the implications of ADHD in the educational context and who are willing to build collective paths to ensure the permanence, learning and well-being of students in situations of inclusion.



In this scenario, initial and continuing teacher training emerges as an indispensable element for the strengthening of inclusive practices. Early Childhood Education, as it is the beginning of the school trajectory, requires from its professionals a careful preparation, which involves knowledge about child development, differentiated mediation strategies and observation capacity sensitive to the specific needs of each child. The teacher who understands ADHD and who acts in a purposeful way in the mediation of learning processes is able to contribute to the construction of a more just, participatory and equitable environment.

Another relevant aspect is the relationship between the school and the family, which needs to be strengthened so that inclusive actions have continuity and coherence between the different contexts experienced by the child. Open communication, mutual support and recognition of the role of the family in the educational process are fundamental for the construction of a support network that favors the integral development of the child with ADHD. When the school and the family work in partnership, it is possible to establish more solid bonds, align expectations and build joint strategies that contribute to the advancement of learning and social coexistence.

In addition to working with families, it is essential to think about public policies that support inclusion actions in Early Childhood Education institutions. The commitment to quality education for all involves the provision of resources, training, specialized support and continuous pedagogical monitoring.

Children with ADHD not only need individualized understanding, but an education system that is structured to embrace diversity and ensure the right to learning with equity. The inclusive school is, above all, a school that recognizes differences as a constitutive part of the educational process and acts collaboratively to respond to the specificities of each student.

The discussion on the inclusion of children with ADHD in Early Childhood Education also invites reflection on traditional teaching models and the need to transform school practices. Teaching centered on the control of behavior, the rigidity of routines and the standardization of knowledge tends to exclude those who do not fit the expected standard.

Therefore, rethinking the pedagogy of childhood in the light of inclusion is a necessary way to ensure that the school fulfills its social function in a democratic and respectful way. Children with ADHD need opportunities to explore, move, express



themselves and learn in a meaningful way, which requires curricular proposals that are more open and sensitive to their specificities.

In this context, this article aims to discuss the main challenges and possibilities of including children with ADHD in Early Childhood Education, considering aspects related to child development, pedagogical practice, teacher training, partnership with families and educational policies. The proposal is to analyze the theme in a comprehensive way, reflecting on how the school can become a more welcoming, democratic space that is sensitive to the singularities of each child, contributing to the construction of an educational model that respects the rights and promotes the effective participation of all.

Therefore, addressing the inclusion of children with ADHD in Early Childhood Education implies recognizing the importance of careful, intentional pedagogical work committed to diversity. It is necessary to advance in the construction of practices that guarantee not only access to school, but the permanence and development of meaningful learning for all children.

In this process, the school's gaze must turn to the child as a subject of rights, valuing their potential and recognizing the necessary conditions for their full participation in the school environment. Thus, inclusion is no longer just an ideal and starts to materialize in the daily life of relationships and pedagogical practices in Early Childhood Education.

## **2 METHODOLOGY**

This article adopts as a methodological approach the bibliographic research, whose purpose is to analyze and interpret the knowledge already produced on the subject of the inclusion of children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in Early Childhood Education.

The choice for this type of investigation is based on the need to gather, understand and discuss relevant theoretical contributions, extracted from sources published in books, scientific articles, dissertations and theses, which deal with the interfaces between ADHD, childhood and inclusive pedagogical practices.

The bibliographic research was conducted based on the selection of materials published in the last ten years, prioritizing national and international productions that address both the clinical and behavioral aspects of ADHD and the pedagogical and institutional challenges related to its inclusion in schools.



Digital academic databases such as SciELO, Google Scholar, CAPES Periódicos and ERIC were used, as well as catalogs from publishers specializing in child education and neurodevelopment. The inclusion criteria considered the relevance of the content, the timeliness of the discussions and the pertinence to the theme investigated.

The analysis of the bibliographic material was carried out qualitatively, with the thematic organization of the contents found and subsequent systematization of the main points discussed by the authors. The interpretation of the data occurred through a critical and reflective reading, seeking to identify recurrences, gaps, convergences and theoretical divergences in the field of study.

The aim was to build a broader understanding of the factors that influence the effective inclusion of children with ADHD in Early Childhood Education, relating pedagogical, institutional, formative and social aspects.

The choice for the bibliographic approach is also justified by the exploratory nature of the research, aimed at expanding knowledge on the subject and grounding more consistent practices in the educational field.

By mapping and discussing different perspectives on the school inclusion of children with ADHD, the present investigation seeks to offer theoretical subsidies that contribute to the improvement of pedagogical practices and to the strengthening of a fairer and more welcoming early childhood education.

### **3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The presence of children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in Early Childhood Education has highlighted the need to reformulate pedagogical practices and the school environment. Contemporary literature demonstrates that, although legal frameworks ensure inclusion, such as the Brazilian Inclusion Law (2015), their effectiveness depends on the construction of a school culture that recognizes the specific needs of this population (Guimarães Jr. et al., 2022). In this sense, it is essential that the kindergarten takes an active role in welcoming and adapting educational spaces and practices.

The behavioral manifestations associated with ADHD — such as motor restlessness, difficulty concentrating, and impulsivity — often create challenges to the organization of the school routine. According to Fonseca (2021), these behaviors, if misunderstood, are interpreted as indiscipline or lack of limits, which generates





exclusionary pedagogical strategies. In many situations, the problem is not with the child, but in the absence of pedagogical mediations appropriate to their way of being, learning and living.

The initial training of teachers has been widely criticized for not contemplating content that enables the recognition and care of children with ADHD in their specificity. Lima and Marques (2020) indicate that, when entering Early Childhood Education institutions, many professionals are unaware of the characteristics of the disorder, which makes it difficult to create effective inclusive strategies. Continuing education, in turn, is still punctual and disconnected from the school routine.

In the studies analyzed, the importance of school environments that prioritize predictability, welcoming, and valuing children's particularities is perceived. Practices such as the use of routine visual posters, the organization of time in short blocks, and playful interventions favor the engagement of children with ADHD (Oliveira et al., 2023). These actions, when systematized, contribute to the development of attention, emotional self-regulation and interaction with peers.

The analysis of school routines shows that the predictability and organization of physical space have a significant impact on the behavior of children with ADHD. Rigid structures and noisy environments tend to intensify the symptoms of the disorder, making it difficult to stay and actively participate in activities. On the other hand, flexible contexts with controlled stimuli expand the possibilities of exploration and learning (Rodrigues, 2022).

The evaluation process also needs to be reformulated when it comes to children with ADHD. Traditional assessments, which require long periods of attention and written response, fail to capture the real abilities of these children. According to Barros and Mendonça (2023), inclusive evaluation must consider multiple forms of expression and records, valuing the processes and not just the results. Direct observation, portfolios and pedagogical narratives have proven effective in this regard.

Another recurring point in the studies concerns the absence of support professionals and multidisciplinary teams in Early Childhood Education schools. The presence of psychopedagogues, occupational therapists or even trained trainees could expand the possibilities of intervention with children with ADHD. According to Santos (2021), the exclusivity of care by the regent teacher becomes unfeasible in the face of the complex demands of the group and individual specificities.





The performance of the management team is also decisive for the construction of an inclusive school. Principals and coordinators who promote active listening to teachers, who guarantee spaces for continuing education and who ensure the adaptation of resources and materials contribute decisively to the success of inclusion (Carvalho & Bastos, 2023). Participatory management strengthens professional bonds and favors an institutional culture based on equity.

The relationship with families appears as a fundamental axis in recent literature. The inclusion of children with ADHD in kindergarten requires an effective partnership with those responsible for them, not only for the alignment of strategies, but also for emotional support. Martins and Ribeiro (2022) state that families who understand the disorder and trust the school institution tend to collaborate more actively, generating security and emotional stability for the child.

Many teachers report frustration when dealing with persistent agitation and inattention behaviors, which can lead to early medicalization and the transfer of responsibility to the clinical field. The criticism of the pathologization of childhood is a central point discussed by Almeida and Teixeira (2020), who defend the investment in pedagogical listening and in the resignification of difference as power. Pedagogical support should come before medical referral, whenever possible.

In successful experiences described in case studies, it has been observed that children with ADHD responded positively to interventions that incorporated movement, art, and orality. Music workshops, rhythm games, and guided play helped channel energy and develop shared attention. Menezes (2022) reports that these strategies, in addition to being pedagogical, are fundamental for children's self-esteem and sociability.

Lima (2023) emphasizes the growing importance of educational technology as a tool to support inclusion in Early Childhood Education, although its use is still incipient. According to the author:

Educational technology, although still little used in Early Childhood Education, has been gaining space as a tool to support inclusion. Apps with visual instructions, interactive videos, and narration resources can help organize tasks and maintain attention. When used with discretion and supervision, these resources expand the autonomy and interest of children with ADHD.

The literature also points to the need to review the Early Childhood Education curriculum in the light of diversity. Homogeneous activities, which require strict discipline



and passive listening, disregard the times and ways of learning of children with ADHD. The curriculum should be flexible, investigative, and respectful of childhood experiences, as advocated by Andrade and Silva (2020).

The inclusion of children with ADHD therefore requires more than institutional goodwill: it requires political commitment, critical training, and investment in structure. Silva and Nunes (2023) emphasize that inclusion is a continuous process, and not a one-off action. It requires confronting inequalities, combating prejudice and valuing uniqueness as a pedagogical principle.

The analysis of the data also points out that the absence of specific records on the presence of children with ADHD in Early Childhood Education makes it difficult to formulate effective public policies. Many educational systems do not count these children as special education audiences, which limits the allocation of resources. Guimarães Jr. et al. (2022) warn of the need to review educational indicators.

In view of all these elements, it can be stated that the kindergarten, when prepared and sensitive, plays a decisive role in the construction of positive school trajectories for children with ADHD. It is up to her not only to adapt content, but also to rethink values, routines, and relationships. Active listening, individualized looking, and the construction of affective bonds are aspects as important as didactic resources.

The challenge of including children with ADHD in Early Childhood Education demands, above all, a paradigm shift: from homogenization to valuing diversity; from medicalization to the pedagogy of presence; from control to welcoming. When the school recognizes that each child has their own time and way of learning, it becomes, in fact, a space of inclusion and belonging.

Understanding the complexity of ADHD and its implications for learning in Early Childhood Education reveals that the development of inclusive strategies must be multidimensional, integrating pedagogical, social, emotional and organizational aspects. It is essential that school institutions create environments that favor the expression of children's potential, recognizing their particularities and promoting their autonomy from the first years of life (Souza & Carvalho, 2020).

The importance of curricular flexibility cannot be underestimated. Rigid curricula, based on uniform standards of performance, tend to exclude students whose ways of learning deviate from what is expected. Andrade and Silva (2020) emphasize that flexibility should contemplate not only the adaptation of content, but also of times, spaces,



and didactic resources, enabling children with ADHD to find their own ways of interacting with knowledge.

Emotional support emerges as a central axis for inclusion. Children with ADHD often face feelings of inadequacy and frustration due to difficulties in school, which can result in low self-esteem and social isolation. Almeida and Teixeira (2020) highlight that active listening practices, valuing individual advances, and encouraging participation in group decisions favor affective development and the construction of positive bonds.

Cooperation between school and family is an essential pillar for the success of inclusion. Open and constant dialogue enables the alignment of expectations and the joint construction of strategies to support the child. Martins and Ribeiro (2022) show that well-informed and engaged families contribute to the maintenance of pedagogical and emotional advances promoted at school.

In terms of professional training, the training deficit is still a significant obstacle. As reported by Menezes (2022), the scarcity of specific continuing education programs for the care of children with ADHD in Early Childhood Education compromises the effectiveness of pedagogical interventions. Overcoming this challenge depends on investment in public policies that prioritize teacher updating as a permanent strategy.

Another relevant dimension is the use of technological resources as tools to support learning. The incorporation of educational applications, digital games, and alternative communication systems offers differentiated stimuli that can capture the attention and favor the concentration of children with ADHD (Lima, 2023). However, teacher mediation is essential to ensure that these resources are used appropriately and productively.

Interdisciplinarity also stands out as an essential element in the approach to ADHD in Early Childhood Education. The articulation between educators, psychologists, occupational therapists, and mental health professionals allows for a more accurate diagnosis and an integrated intervention, which considers the child's global development (Santos & Oliveira, 2022). This perspective expands the school's ability to respond to the specific demands of the student.

However, challenges remain, especially with regard to the structural conditions of the institutions. Silva and Nunes (2023) point out that the overload of teachers, the absence of adequate spaces, and the scarcity of support professionals make it difficult to



implement inclusive policies. The insufficiency of human and material resources represents a barrier that limits the quality of education offered to children with ADHD.

In the social aspect, stigma and misinformation still permeate the school environment, configuring themselves as factors that hinder full inclusion. Queiroz and Damasceno (2021) emphasize that the lack of understanding about ADHD can lead to misjudgments and punitive disciplinary strategies, which aggravate the child's distancing from the educational process. The deconstruction of these prejudices requires a profound cultural change in the school environment.

The promotion of spaces for dialogue and reflection within schools on the diversity and specific conditions of children with special educational needs has been shown to be effective in reducing prejudice and strengthening empathy (Fonseca, 2021). This awareness contributes to the construction of a more welcoming environment that is conducive to learning for all.

At the same time, the positive impact of play-based interventions as a pedagogical tool is widely recognized. Playing enables the expression of emotions, cognitive development, and socialization, fundamental aspects for children with ADHD who face difficulties in behavioral and emotional regulation (Andrade & Figueiredo, 2021).

Studies also highlight that investment in school environments that encourage the autonomy and protagonism of children with ADHD contributes to strengthening self-esteem and self-confidence, which are decisive factors for school permanence and success (Menezes, 2022). Active participation in decisions involving daily school life helps children feel valued and respected.

The literature also shows that the inclusion process should be understood as dynamic and under constant construction, which demands continuous evaluation and adjustments to pedagogical practices. Individualized planning, accompanied by formative and participatory assessments, proves to be a valuable instrument for adapting strategies to the specific needs of the student (Barros & Mendonça, 2023).

Finally, it is possible to state that overcoming the barriers to the inclusion of children with ADHD in Early Childhood Education requires a broad mobilization, involving managers, teachers, families and public policies committed to equity. The collective commitment to the right to learning and the integral development of these children is what will ensure the advancement of inclusive education.



#### 4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The inclusion of children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in Early Childhood Education is a multifaceted challenge that requires commitment from the entire school community, as well as effective public policies. From the analysis of the results and the discussion, it is clear that the simple legal recognition of the right to inclusion is not enough to guarantee equity in the educational process. It is necessary that institutions are prepared to welcome and adapt their pedagogical practices to the singularities of children with ADHD, promoting a welcoming, flexible and stimulating environment.

It was observed that teacher training plays a crucial role in this context. The lack of preparation and specific knowledge about the disorder compromises the quality of interventions and the effectiveness of inclusion. The implementation of continuing education programs, which value the understanding of ADHD and the construction of differentiated pedagogical strategies, is essential for professionals to feel confident and able to promote truly inclusive teaching.

Another relevant aspect is the need for participatory and sensitive school management, which fosters collaboration between teachers, multidisciplinary teams and families. The articulation of these instances contributes to the construction of a solid and integral support for the child, contemplating their cognitive, emotional and social needs. The partnership with families is a factor that strengthens the support network, providing continuity between the school and family environments.

Curricular flexibility and diversification of pedagogical strategies proved to be essential to respond to the specific demands of children with ADHD. Adapting the contents, methods and learning times allows these children to find favorable conditions for the development of their potential. Organized environments, with predictable routines and playful resources, help in engagement and self-regulation, favoring active participation.

The structural conditions and resources available in the institutions still have limitations that need to be overcome. The absence of support professionals, the overload of teachers and the lack of adequate materials compromise the advancement of inclusive practices. Investments in infrastructure and staff are essential to ensure adequate service and quality of the educational process.



The importance of raising awareness and combating stigma in relation to ADHD is highlighted. The construction of a welcoming school culture, which recognizes diversity as a constitutive element of the educational space, is a sine qua non condition for the success of inclusion. This implies reviewing preconceived conceptions, deconstructing stigmas and promoting respect for differences.

In summary, the inclusion of children with ADHD in Early Childhood Education represents a movement that goes beyond the merely legal and political aspect, configuring itself as a cultural and pedagogical transformation. It requires articulated, continuous and systematic efforts, involving training, management, family and curriculum, always guided by valuing the diversity and unique potential of each child. Only in this way will it be possible to achieve an inclusive education that respects and promotes everyone's right to learn.

It is important to highlight that the inclusion process must be understood as dynamic and constantly evolving. The needs of children with ADHD can vary over time, requiring that pedagogical practices and resources be regularly reviewed and adjusted. This permanent look at child development enables more precise and effective interventions, contributing to school success and children's well-being.

Another point that deserves attention is the appreciation of active listening and child protagonism. Encouraging children's participation in the construction of their own learning process strengthens autonomy and self-esteem, fundamental elements to overcome the difficulties associated with the disorder. Inclusive early childhood education must therefore promote spaces for dialogue and expression, respecting the different forms of communication and interaction.

The effective inclusion of children with ADHD in Early Childhood Education requires a broad mobilization that goes beyond the walls of the school. Public policies, investments in training and infrastructure, in addition to the engagement of society in general, are essential for the principles of inclusion to be translated into concrete and transformative practices. In this way, it is possible to build a fairer, more equitable and welcoming education, which recognizes and values the potential of all children.

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