

Starfall®



Teacher's Guide

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Starfall Education Foundation

P.O. Box 359, Boulder, CO 80302

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Starfall's Pre-K Curriculum is...

-  **Integrated** — Young children learn best when they can make connections across many disciplines. Therefore, early literacy, math, social studies, science, social-emotional development, creative arts, physical movement, health, and technology are integrated throughout the curriculum.
-  **Standards-Based** — The Starfall curriculum establishes clear and developmentally appropriate goals for children's learning based on multiple state, district, and federal programs including VPK, UPK, and Head Start. Benchmarks are listed alongside each lesson plan.
-  **Systematic, Spiraled, and Scaffolded** — Children retain new information when it connects with previous knowledge and experiences. New information is presented in a logical and linear fashion. Thereafter children move from simple concepts to advanced understanding through a continuum where skills and concepts are reviewed, revisited, and expanded.
-  **Focused on Early Literacy** — Children with large vocabularies who exhibit phonological and phonemic awareness skills are more likely to become literate. Starfall Pre-K develops these skills and applies them to phonics, concepts of print, comprehension, and writing, laying the foundation for long-term achievement.
-  **Focused on Math** — The Starfall Pre-K curriculum integrates and emphasizes math skills and concepts. Direct instruction, center exploration, games, and activities provide a practical approach to applied math children encounter in everyday life.
-  **A Balance of Instruction and Exploration** — The Starfall teacher facilitates learning. Direct instruction provides a framework to ensure that children receive target skills, concepts, and strategies. Learning Center and Exploration times provide children time and opportunity to explore and experiment with what they have learned.



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A Learning-Centered Classroom

During Learning Center time in the Starfall classroom, children are fully engaged in the Learning Centers. They are not pulled out to participate in small group sessions or art projects. Rather, children work uninterrupted and have the full attention of the teacher and paraprofessional.

Learning Centers provide the most natural and effective use of classroom materials, time, and space. Children are free to make choices, to handle, taste, smell, and observe, to explore at their own developmental levels, to solve problems in their own way, to share with friends, to dramatize, and to create. Children move around freely and learn by doing. As they change activities, they meet different groups of children and have frequent contacts with the teacher. They learn to work and socialize with others. They meet problems and learn to solve them. They grow in confidence and self-respect.

Most importantly, Learning Centers are fun and are based on purposeful play, which is integral to how young children learn. At center time, children choose the center in which they wish to work and which materials they use. Children need uninterrupted time to explore learning activities and develop interests and talents. During this period, most Learning Centers (computer, art, dramatic play, construction, discovery, library, writing, and math) are open. Teachers observe children, ask open-ended questions, and make suggestions that extend children's play and support their learning.

Learning Centers integrate literacy learning by featuring reading and writing. Paper and pencils are found in the Construction Center for children to use to create signs ("Please do not knock this building down.") and in the Dramatic Play Center for grocery lists and signs such as "Dentist's Office" or "Restaurant." Alphabet books are placed in the Writing Center, counting books in the Math Center, and appropriate books in the Discovery, Construction, and Art Centers.

Your role in Learning Centers

Provider: You provide the children with challenges and opportunities to learn, and then trust them to construct their own knowledge in their own unique ways. Carefully select materials and equipment that reflect the developmental needs of the children, encourage their current interests, and spark new ones. Provide a variety of open-ended materials that allow choices by the children and invite them to learn. In addition to the general materials typical for each Learning Center, add specific materials for each thematic unit to extend the topic and to develop new vocabulary and purposes for reading and writing.

Facilitator: You facilitate the active exploration and learning of each child. Children need help as they experiment, observe, question, record observations, or search for materials on a topic of interest.

If you are aware of the skill needs of each child, you can find opportunities to effectively incorporate these skills. Start by asking questions which promote communication and learning. Rather than saying, "Nice tunnel" or "Good picture," give the children opportunities to talk about their work using open-ended questions and requests, such as "How did you build this?" or "Tell me about your picture."

You also coordinate and facilitate the efforts of resource teachers, paraprofessionals, and parent volunteers who work with your children. Arrange for these adults to work with the children in ways which are compatible with the existing atmosphere and organization of your learning environment.



Evaluator/Observer: Your purpose in observing and evaluating is to help the children. The progress made in all areas of development – emotional, social, cognitive, and physical – must be observed and noted in order for you to provide appropriate activities. Observation and recording should occur spontaneously and continually in the classroom, enabling you to be responsive to the children’s interests and provide relevant learning experiences. You move from area to area to assist, suggest, question, and answer. Constant awareness on your part helps to keep children involved. How you ascertain the development of each child will vary, but should include the following:

- ★ **Personal interaction** - At the Art Center, you observe a child shaping play dough into an animal. Talk with the child about his work, and indicate a place to display the animal. At the Discovery Center you might ask, “Why do you think your sand tunnel collapsed?”
- ★ **Close observation** - During Learning Centers notice conversations, movement within the Centers, and how the children relate to each other. Is the child’s play reciprocal? Observe social-emotional and communication skills.
- ★ **Collect timely samples** of the child’s work (artwork, handwriting, dictated stories, etc.)
- ★ **Keep anecdotal records** - *“Kim doesn’t like messy paint or clay. Enjoys tidy art activities.”*
“I wonder if Kevin needs glasses. Holds his head very near the paper and books, does not catch a ball yet.”

Recorder: There is no standard form for recording children’s activities and behaviors. Develop a method which works for you. You might choose a binder to keep records for each child, and note the date and specific comments about the child. Or you may prefer to keep anecdotal records on index cards adding comments as appropriate during the day.

Your school or district may have a particular checklist that can serve as a guide for your daily record keeping. These observations and written records are primarily to help further the child’s development, but they also can be used as a reference for parent conferences and as a basis for the written report that may be given to parents each grading period.

Exploration/Small Group

Starfall feels strongly that the Learning Center experience should be an uninterrupted period of time therefore an additional period has been added to allow children the opportunity to engage in free choice activities. It is during this Exploration period that “pull outs” occur.

Designate an area or cabinet for games and activities that would not typically be used in a specific Learning Center such as memory games, board games, doll houses, farms, zoos, table and floor puzzles, building blocks and other construction manipulatives etc. Children will choose from these materials during Exploration.

Divide your class into two or three small groups. During Exploration, four days each week, call a small group to work with you on a specific skill outlined in the lesson plans. Your paraprofessional should remain free to facilitate children in the Exploration areas and not pull children out for additional small groups. On day five there is no planned small group session. Use this day to make up sessions missed by children who have been absent, or to form groups of children who need additional reinforcement.

Preparing Your Classroom

Set up the Classroom Alphabet Board



Display the Starfall Alphabet Cards at children's eye level. Each Alphabet Card contains the uppercase and lowercase letter and a sound-picture. The designated sound-picture is used throughout the curriculum to introduce and review that letter/sound.

Allow space below each letter to accommodate index-sized cards. Occasionally you will post word cards under the appropriate letter. (E.g. a child's name under the first letter of the name.)

Display the Alphabet Poster



The Alphabet Poster contains the letters and sounds represented on the Classroom Alphabet Cards. Display this poster in your Writing Center.

Beginning of the Year Checklist (Prior to the first day of school)

- ★ Display the Starfall Alphabet Wall Cards
- ★ Display Color Wall Cards
- ★ Display Number Wall Cards
- ★ Display American Sign Language Poster
- ★ Prepare Attendance Board Photo/Name cards
- ★ Establish a Pocket Chart for the Attendance Routine
- ★ Establish a Weather Center
- ★ Prepare Birthday Cake display
- ★ Organize Picture Cards
- ★ Set up *Starfall.com* on classroom computers
- ★ Determine method for Gingerbread Boy's daily message
- ★ Prepare Assessment materials

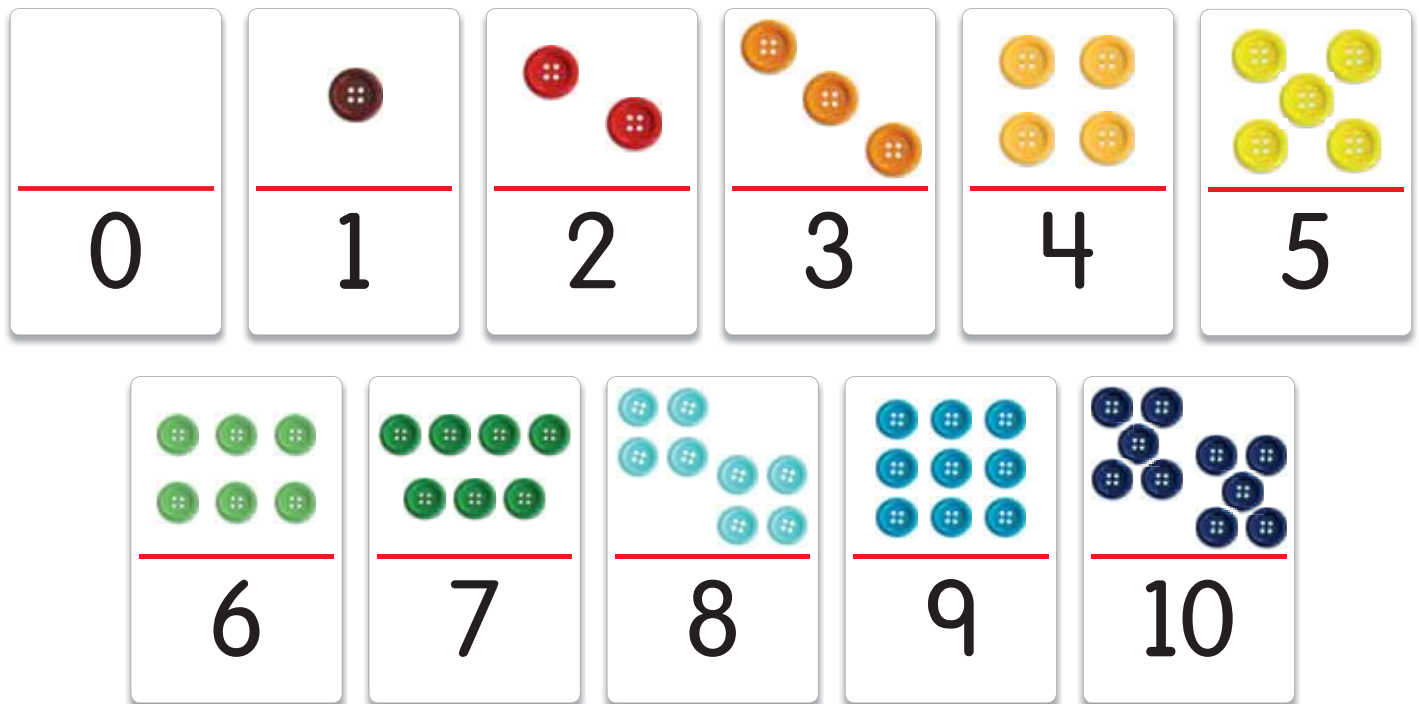
Note: The Calendar Routine will not begin until Week 5.

Put up the Classroom Color and Number Wall Cards

Display the Color Wall Cards near the Art Area. Make sure the cards are easily viewable from your gathering space.



Display the Number Wall Cards at children's eye level near the Math Center. Make sure the cards are easily viewable from your gathering space.



Assemble the Attendance Board

The Attendance Board is used daily to establish who is present, and as an instructional tool throughout the curriculum. (See Daily Routines on page 12.)

Name Cards should be laminated since they will be handled on a regular basis. Visually emphasize the first letter of each name on the cards. (e.g. in bold or colored red)

Present	Absent
	
	

Materials:
<input type="checkbox"/> Name Cards for each child, using photos and first names
<input type="checkbox"/> A Pocket Chart to accommodate the Name Cards
<input type="checkbox"/> Heading Cards: <i>Present</i> and <i>Absent</i> , or <i>Here</i> and <i>Who's Missing?</i>

Build a Weather Station

Prepare a space to accommodate a "Weather Station." Each morning children will observe the weather, predict the afternoon weather, and forecast the next day's weather. (See Daily Routines on page 12.)

Attach Velcro dots to the chart or wall under each heading, and to the back of each Weather Card for easy placement and removal.

Materials:
<input type="checkbox"/> Heading Cards: <i>Today's Weather</i> , <i>Our Prediction</i> , and <i>Tomorrow's Forecast</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Weather Cards (provided): <i>cloudy</i> , <i>cold</i> , <i>cool</i> , <i>rainy</i> , <i>snowy</i> , <i>stormy</i> , <i>sunny</i> , and <i>windy</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Velcro dots

Today's Weather	Our Prediction	Tomorrow's Forecast
		

Put up the Calendar

The calendar is used as a tool to show children how to keep track of important events. You may wish to purchase a linear calendar pocket chart as shown below. These are available through Amazon.com and Oriental Trading Company. Starfall Calendar Cards are included with the lesson plan supplements (Classroom Kit) or downloadable from the Starfall Parent-Teacher Center at teach.starfall.com (Homeschool Kit).



Make a Birthday Chart

An appropriate way to introduce months of the year to young children is through the use of a birthday chart. Children have a natural interest in learning the names of the months related to their birthdays and/or the birthdays of friends.

To make a birthday chart, photocopy the "Birthday Cake & Candles" master blackline. You will need one candle for each child and twelve birthday cakes. Cut out, decorate, and laminate the cakes. Write the name a month on each one. Print a small photo of each child, and attach it to his or her birthday month. Display the cakes on the classroom wall in order, beginning with August. Cut out and color the candles. Write each child's name on a candle, and attach it to his or her birthday month above the child's photo. Fold the flame back behind the candle. On the child's birthday, fold the flame up so it shows. Celebrate summer birthdays sometime during the school year.



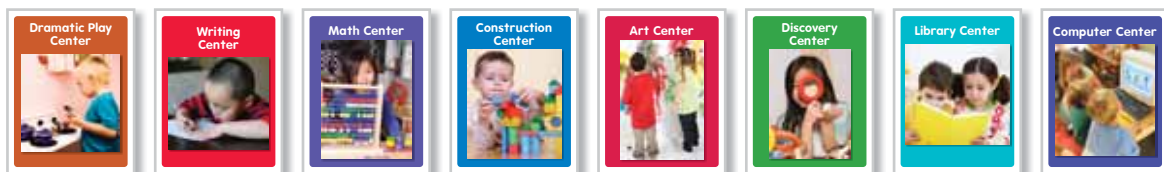
Prepare a Learning Center Choice Board

A learning center Choice Board gives children a concrete method for managing center time. Therefore, the following materials are included:

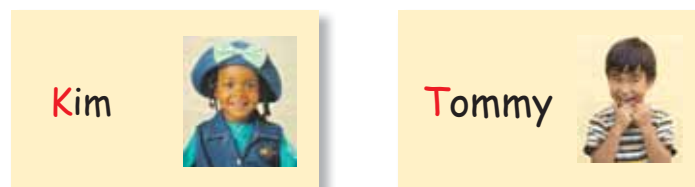
Large Two-sided Learning Center Identification Cards to post above your centers (Not included with the Homeschool Kit).



Identical Small Learning Center Cards to use on your Learning Center Planning Chart.



Individual Child Name Cards with space for a photo. Use a pocket chart or attach Velcro to the back of each child's Name Card.



Use a system for Learning Center sign-up that works well for you. See Daily Routines on page 12 for Learning Center management suggestions.

Create a Responsibility or Job Chart

Children need to learn the importance of caring for their classroom. Create a job for each child in your class. One job may even be assigned to two children to share. At the beginning of the year, assign jobs to ensure that children are able to experience all of the different responsibilities. As children become adept, they can mentor their peers. You may wish to have children change jobs by the week or by the day.

As the year progresses, children choose their own jobs. Randomly flash children's Name Cards. When their names are revealed, the children choose jobs.

Introduction of jobs and responsibilities is not formally addressed in the lesson plans. Create a job chart and a procedure that works best for you.

Jobs may be divided into Early Morning Jobs, Lunchtime Jobs, and Afternoon Jobs (if you are a full-day session).

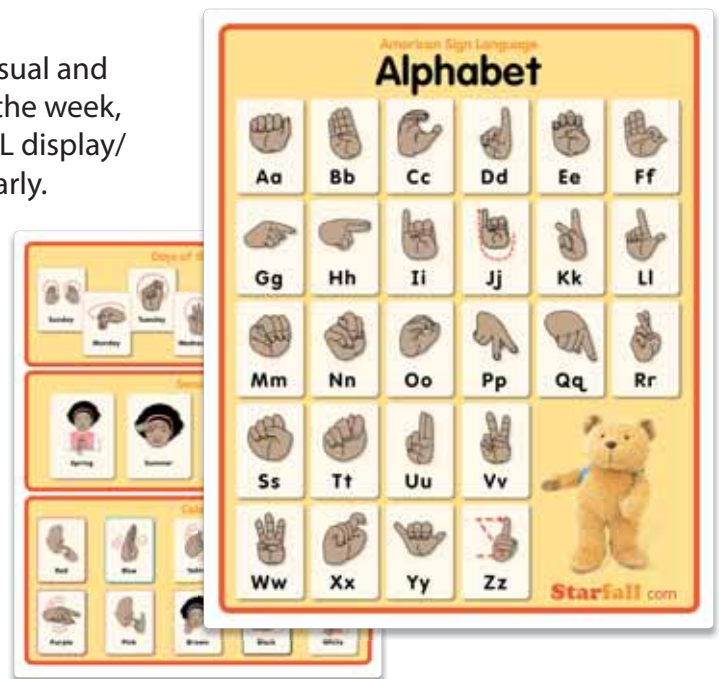
Suggested Job Titles:

- ★ Schedule Manager
- ★ Snack Helpers
- ★ Soap Manager (waterless soap dispensers)
- ★ Gardener (water plants)
- ★ Floor Manager
- ★ Zoo Keepers
- ★ Door Holder
- ★ Chair Manager
- ★ Maitre-de
- ★ Door Closer
- ★ Electrician (light helper)
- ★ Equipment Manager
- ★ Line Leader
- ★ Duster
- ★ Area Managers
- ★ Classroom Book Helper
- ★ Meteorologist
- ★ Flag Bearer(s) (state and US flag)
- ★ Librarian
- ★ Calendar Helper

Learn some American Sign Language

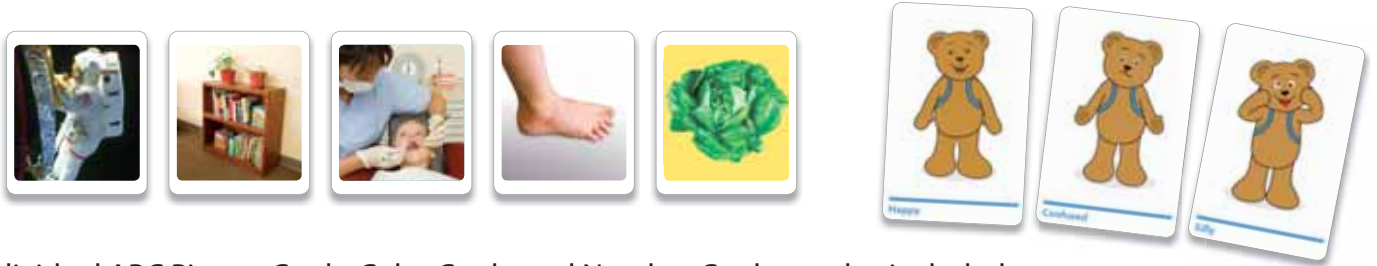
Starfall integrates American Sign Language (ASL) as a visual and kinesthetic means of teaching sound-spellings, days of the week, seasons, and colors. Learn the ASL hand signs on the ASL display/reference poster. You and your class will use them regularly.

For additional instruction on the American Sign Language alphabet you can access the ABC section on *Starfall.com*. Each letter of the alphabet is demonstrated in a short video that you can access by clicking on the "interpreter" symbol in the bottom row.



Organize your Picture Cards

Instructional Picture Cards are provided for use in phonemic awareness and phonics activities. Theme-related *Picture Cards* and *Emotions Cards* assist in presenting and reviewing concepts.



Individual ABC Picture Cards, Color Cards, and Number Cards are also included.



Set up Starfall.com on your classroom computers



Starfall.com is an interactive website where children practice letters, sounds, words, sentences, and stories, to reinforce the day's lessons. With a Starfall subscription, you will receive all of the content you know and love from the free *Starfall.com* website, plus new content, including numbers and math, colors, songs, and rhymes.

Starfall also provides Resource Generators in the Parent-Teacher Center at *teach.starfall.com*, which allows teachers to customize and print pictures, worksheets, and more for various activities throughout the year.

Additional Materials for Starfall Pre-K

Books with Read-Along Audio CDs:

- *Nursery Rhymes*
- *The Gingerbread Boy*
- *The Little Red Hen and other Folk Tales*
- *Draw Dragon Dot Eyes and other Chinese Fables*
- *Stone Soup*
- *The Cobbler and the Elves*
- *A Day in the Life of A Firefighter*
- *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*
- *Who Likes the Rain?*
- *Thermometers*
- *How the Turtle Cracked Its Shell*
- *Why the Sun and the Moon Live in the Sky*
- *Reach for the Stars*
- *Over in the Meadow*
- *The Story of Milk*
- *The Frog Prince*
- *The Ugly Duckling*
- *Dolphins Are Not Fish*
- *Humpback Whales*
- *Dinosaurs!*
- *The Three Little Pigs*
- *My Father Runs an Excavator*
- *A Tale of Two Little Engines*
- *The Troll Who Lived Under the Bridge*
- *Green Grass Grows All Around*
- *The Ant and the Chrysalis*

 **Story Sequence** and **Picture Cards** to go with many of the fiction books.

Music CDs and Lyric Books:

- *Starfall's Selected Nursery Rhymes, Book and Audio CD*
- *Starfall Sing-Along Volumes 1 and 2, Books and Audio CDs*
- *Star Writer Melodies Audio CD*

Posters:

- ABC Poster
- Animals
- Dinosaurs
- Let's Stay Healthy!
- My Five Senses
- Playground
- Safety Posters 1 and 2
- Trains
- The Four Seasons

 **Plush Gingerbread Boy** and **Grandmother** from the Gingerbread Boy story come to life in your classroom as a classmate and a classroom volunteer.

 **Gingerbread Boy Stamp and Stickers, Starfall Pencils, and more!**



CDs can be stored together like this.

Daily Routines



Gingerbread Boy's Daily Message

Gingerbread Boy delivers magic each day in a message he secretly hides in the Writing Center. Use the Gingerbread Boy's Message Generator on *Starfall.com* to create his daily messages, or write them on large post-it notes. Sign them with Gingerbread Boy's print stamp and place them in the Writing Center after school each day so that they are ready in the morning.

Although suggested messages are included in the plans, feel free to adjust the messages to meet the needs of your class, school events, or personality of your Gingerbread Boy.

Each day a volunteer retrieves the message from the Writing Center during the Morning Meeting.

Gathering Meeting

The Gathering Meeting consists of three routines:

- ★ **Attendance Routine**
- ★ **Weather Routine**
- ★ **Calendar Routine** (beginning Week 5)

Attendance Routine

Each day children place their **Name Cards** in the **Present** column on the **Attendance Board**. This Board is used to address a variety of phonics skills throughout the curriculum. In the beginning of the year attach a photo of each child to his/her **Name Card**. This not only assists children in recognizing and locating their names quickly, but also helps them to recognize the names of their classmates. When appropriate, replace these **Name Cards** with ones that do not include photos.



Weather Routine

Utilizing the "**Weather Station**" suggested in **Classroom Preparations** will familiarize children with weather and weather words and in addition will preview observing, predicting, and forecasting concepts. Each day the classroom meteorologist selects the Weather Card that represents the weather when the children arrived, predicts the weather later in the day (afternoon), and later, forecasts what the weather might be the next day.

Calendar Routine

At the beginning of each week, add the home and school symbols, as well as any applicable Special Day Cards to the linear calendar pocket chart. Children will understand the calendar best if you place the first “school day” at the beginning of the week, and put the weekend “home days” together at the end of the row. Look at the calendar with the children each day while the Calendar Helper moves the calendar star to the current day’s space.

Research in child development indicates that children do not truly understand time concepts until the first or second grade, even though they may use words associated with time concepts. Initially, the calendar is used as an informational graph to identify important events such as a child’s birthday, holidays, guest speakers, etc. Over the course of the year, the calendar routine expands into more complicated concepts.

Adding Complexity

If your class seems ready, January might be a good time to introduce the children to a traditional grid calendar that displays the days of the week and the dates. If you switch to a grid calendar help children make the transition by continuing to use the home and school symbols from the linear calendar.

Note: Many children are confused or overwhelmed by the organization of the grid calendar and the concepts of months, days, and dates, so don’t expect children to master this format yet. Children will have many opportunities to learn about months, days of the week, and numeric dates in Kindergarten and First Grade.

Morning Meeting

Warm Up Your Brain Activities

Each day the Morning Meeting will begin with a short Warm Up Your Brain activity. These movements/exercises help develop small and large motor control, improve coordination, create brain patterns, and activate both sides of the brain among other benefits. You will notice that on occasion the movement/exercise occurs as part of the Morning Meeting rather than at the beginning.



Learning Centers

Below are some suggestions for managing Learning Center Time. If you have a management routine that has been successful for you, we encourage you to use it.

Partition the classroom with shelves, bookcases, or dividers to provide small spaces. Large open areas invite children to run! Arrange Centers according to the noise and activity levels. Quieter Centers, such as Library (with an electrical outlet), Writing, and Math Centers, should be grouped together. The Dramatic Play, Construction, Discovery, and Art Centers should be located in another area of the classroom. The Art Center, with double-sided easels, and the Discovery Center should be placed on easy-to-clean flooring near a sink. Carpeted areas work best for housing the Construction, Dramatic Play, and Library Centers to reduce noise. Make sure you can see all areas of the classroom at all times.



Managing Center Time

Before Learning Center time, discuss the activities that are available. A Choice Board (described below) with illustrations will help children make choices. A matching illustrated label should be placed in each Learning Center.

Explain how children will place their names on the Choice Board to indicate where they will work. Discuss how the number of Velcro strips, dots, etc., shows the number of children who can be in a Center at one time and where children place their names.

When children are finished working in one area, they are free to move to another. Instruct the children to move their cards when they decide to try another Center.

Five minutes before cleanup time, ring a bell or use some signal to let children know they need to finish up their work. In areas such as Construction or Dramatic Play, children should begin cleanup earlier.



★ **Choice Board I:** Create and laminate a Choice Board with illustrations of the different Learning Centers in your classroom, using the Learning Center Cards provided. In each section, place dots to represent the number of children who can work in each Learning Center. Use a permanent marker to write each child's name on a clothespin. At Center time, each child in turn clips his or her clothespin on the Center of choice. When children wish to change Centers, they move their clothespins to other Centers with empty spaces.

★ **Choice Board II:** This option is the same as above, using Velcro instead of dots. Place Velcro dots to represent the number of children who can work in each Center on the Choice Board under each illustrated category. Write each child's name on a small card. Laminate the cards, and place Velcro on the back. Continue as above.

There are many other methods for managing Learning Centers such as weekly graphs on which children color in the Centers where they would like to work each day, or various colored necklaces, bracelets, or props that children can wear to indicate their preferences. Some teachers conference individually with children to determine where they would like to work and what they plan to do there. Consider the options carefully to decide which will work best in your classroom.



Lesson Plan Format

The easy-to-follow lesson plans include Whole Group, Small Group, and Learning Center activities. Each session builds on the next, and must be completed in sequence.

10 minutes



Gathering

- Attendance Activities
- Weather Observation/Prediction
- Weekly Calendar (beginning Week 5)

15 minutes



Morning Meeting

- Warm Up Your Brain Activity
- Integrated theme development including literacy and/or math skills

45 minutes



Learning Centers

- Teacher/Paraprofessional interact, engage, and observe children
- No pull-out sessions

15 minutes



Circle Time

- Share center experiences
- Phonemic/Phonological Warm Up
- Early Literacy/Letter-Sound

15 minutes



Story Time

- Read-alouds and related concept-development activities

40 minutes



Exploration/Small Group






- Children move freely among Exploration activities facilitated by paraprofessional
- Small Group pull-out sessions led by teacher

(The Classroom Kit includes a printed copy of the Teacher's Guide. With the Homeschool Kit, the lesson plans may be accessed by week via the Parent-Teacher Center at teach.starfall.com. Printed copies are available for purchase separately if desired.)



Yearly Theme Plan

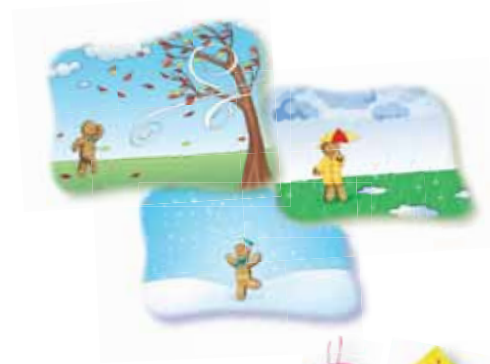
*Indicates Nonfiction

Unit	Week	Target Letter	Theme Focus	Literature
Off to School Unit 1 	1	Alphabet Preview	Here We Are!	Teacher's Choice <i>The Gingerbread Boy</i>
	2	Alphabet Preview	Look at You!	<i>The Gingerbread Boy</i>
	3	Alphabet Preview	Be a Good Friend	"Mr. Bunny's Carrot Soup"
	4	Alphabet Preview	Colors & Numbers	"Draw Dragon Dot Eyes" <i>Let's Eat!</i>
Your Home & Neighborhood Unit 2 	5	<i>Bb</i>	Your Family	"The Little Red Hen"
	6	<i>Tt</i>	Your Neighborhood	<i>Stone Soup</i>
	7	<i>Nn</i>	Community Helpers	<i>The Cobbler and the Elves</i> <i>A Day in the Life of a Firefighter*</i>
Your Body Unit 3 	8	<i>Ss</i>	Your Five Senses	"Chicken Little"
	9	<i>Aa</i>	Staying Healthy	"One Rice Thousand Gold"
	10	<i>Pp</i>	Being Safe	<i>Goldilocks & the Three Bears</i>
The Great Outdoors Unit 4 	11	<i>Ll</i>	Observing Weather	<i>Who Likes the Rain?</i> <i>Thermometers*</i>
	12	<i>Rr</i>	The Four Seasons	<i>How the Turtle Cracked Its Shell</i>
	13	<i>Cc</i>	Outer Space	<i>Why the Sun & Moon Live in the Sky</i> <i>Reach for the Stars*</i>
Animals Everywhere! Unit 5 	14	<i>Ee</i>	Pets	<i>The Frog Prince</i>
	15	<i>Mm</i>	At the Farm	"The Little Rooster" <i>The Story of Milk*</i> <i>The Troll Who Lived Under the Bridge</i>
	16	<i>Ff</i>	In the Wild	<i>Over in the Meadow</i>
	17	<i>Dd</i> <i>Oo</i>	Animals In the Air and Sea	<i>The Ugly Duckling</i> <i>Humpback Whales*</i> <i>Dolphins Are Not Fish!*</i>
	18	<i>Kk</i>	Dinosaurs	<i>Dinosaurs!</i>

Unit	Week	Target Letter	Theme Focus	Literature
Watch Us Work Unit 6 	19	Ww Hh	Let's Build It!	<i>The Three Little Pigs</i>
	20	li Xx	Let's Move It!	<i>My Father Runs an Excavator *</i>
	21	Yy Vv	Let's Go!	<i>A Tale of Two Little Engines</i>
Your Environment Unit 7 	22	Gg	How Things Grow	<i>The Green Grass Grew All Around</i> <i>The Troll Who Lived Under the Bridge (repeated)</i>
	23	Uu Qq	Plant It!	"The Turnip"
	24	Jj Zz	Things Change	<i>The Ant and the Chrysalis</i>
	25	Review	Look At Us Now!	"The Four Friends"

Holiday Plans

Starfall Pre-K formally schedules 25 weeks of lesson plans. The remaining weeks are allotted to seasonal activities as they occur throughout the year. Rather than taking a week off and delaying the next set of concepts and skills to accommodate a seasonal event, extend one week of plans to two, and incorporate holiday activities as part of the regular curriculum. The holiday plans include activities, songs, rhymes, recipes, and more!



Fall	Winter	Spring
Season of Fall	Season of Winter	Season of Spring
Grandparents' Day	Chinese New Year	St. Patrick's Day
Johnny Appleseed	Groundhog Day	Earth Day
Harvest/Halloween	Valentine's Day	Cinco de Mayo
Thanksgiving	Black History Month	Mother's Day

Starfall Pre-K Standards & Benchmarks

The Starfall standards and benchmarks were designed in preparation for Pre-K Common Core Standards, to address the VPK, Head Start, and UPK programs, and to reflect many current Pre-K state standards. The resulting Starfall standards provided the guidelines for the development of our balanced and comprehensive Pre-K program.

Common Core Ready — Emergent Reading

Motivation for Reading

- Enjoys reading and reading-related activities
- Interacts appropriately with books and other materials in a print-rich environment
- Asks to be read to or asks the meaning of written text

Phonics: Alphabetic Knowledge

- Recites the alphabet in sequence
- Focuses on letter names and shapes
- Recognizes most letters when named
- Names most letters
- Recognizes/names some letter sounds
- Matches some letters to their sounds

Print/Book Awareness

- Connects oral language and print
- Shows where reading begins on a page
- Demonstrates directionality in print
- Distinguishes relationship between print and illustrations
- Identifies front cover, title, and first, middle, and end pages of a book
- Understands that letters form words
- Counts words

Sentences & Structure

- Uses complete sentences of four or more words, usually with subject, verb, and object order
- Uses regular and irregular plurals, regular past tense, personal and possessive pronouns, and subject-verb agreement
- Uses sentences with more than one phrase
- Combines more than one idea using complex sentences
- Combines sentences that give detail, sticks to the topic, and clearly communicates intended meaning

Phonological Awareness

- Distinguishes individual words within spoken phrases or sentences
- Identifies spoken words as same or different
- Combines words to make a compound word
- Deletes a word from a compound word
- Counts syllables
- Deletes a syllable from a word
- Combines onset and rime to form a familiar one-syllable word with and without pictorial support
- Identifies rhyming words
- Discriminates rhyming words
- Listens for beginning sound
- Isolates ending sound
- Blends three phonemes

Vocabulary

- Acquires new vocabulary
- Discusses words and word meanings
- Asks questions about unknown objects and words
- Uses illustrations to find the meanings of unknown words
- Understands describing words
- Identifies signs, labels, and environmental print

Listening & Speaking

- Understands by asking and answering relevant questions, adding comments relevant to the topic, and reacting appropriately to what is said
- Follows simple and multiple-step directions
- Engages in agreed-upon rules for discussions
- Describes familiar people, places, things, and events and, with prompting and support, provides additional detail
- Participates in group discussions

Conversation

- Demonstrates varied uses of language (e.g., requesting, commenting, using manner words, problem-solving)
- Follows another's conversational lead, appropriately initiates or terminates conversations, or appropriately introduces new content
- Provides appropriate information for the setting
- Demonstrates knowledge of verbal conversational rules (e.g., appropriately takes turns, does not interrupt, uses appropriate verbal expressions, and uses appropriate intonation)
- Demonstrates knowledge of nonverbal conversational rules (e.g., appropriate eye contact, appropriate facial expressions, maintaining a comfortable distance in conversation)
- Matches language to social and academic contexts (e.g. uses volume appropriate to context, addresses adults more formally than he or she addresses other children, and uses the more formal academic language of the classroom)

Emergent Writing

- Uses drawing to convey meaning
- Demonstrates understanding of the connections among their own ideas, experiences, and written expression
- Contributes to a shared writing experience or topic of interest
- Uses scribbles/writing to convey meaning (e.g., signing artwork, captioning, labeling, creating lists, making notes)
- Uses letter-like shapes or letters to write words or parts of words
- Writes own name
- Writes some letters on request
- When writing or dictating, uses appropriate writing conventions (e.g., starts a letter with "Dear"; writes a story with a beginning, middle, and end)

Comprehension

- Retells or reenacts a story after it is read aloud
- Asks and answers appropriate questions about the story
- Recalls information from stories
- Makes connections using illustrations/photos, prior knowledge, and real-life experiences
- Uses illustration clues to predict
- Identifies sequence of events
- Connects events, characters, and actions in stories to specific experiences
- Identifies story characters
- Identifies basic similarities in and differences between two texts on the same topic
- Distinguishes between fiction and nonfiction
- Makes inferences
- Compares and contrasts
- Recognizes cause and effect
- Identifies role of author/illustrator
- Recalls important facts of informational text



Common Core Ready — Math

Counting & Cardinality

- Verbally counts in sequence
- Counts sets of objects
- Constructs sets of objects
- Uses one-to-one correspondence to determine “how many”
- Compares and orders groups of objects (more, fewer, less, and/or same)
- Understands that numbers always represent the same quantity
- Uses ordinal numbers from first to fifth
- Recognizes numerals
- Uses numbers to predict, estimate, and make realistic guesses
- Combines and separates sets of objects to create new sets
- Recognizes numbers in the environment
- Uses different ways to represent numbers

Patterns & Seriation

- Recognizes patterns and non-patterns
- Duplicates identical patterns with at least two elements
- Uses rules to create and extend repeating patterns
- Sorts objects into categories
- Describes objects according to characteristics or attributes
- Orders objects in increasing order of size

Geometry

- Recognizes basic two-dimensional geometric shapes
- Categorizes (sorts) examples of two-dimensional shapes
- Understands that two-dimensional shapes are equivalent in different orientations
- Identifies the number of sides of two-dimensional shapes
- Identifies three-dimensional shapes
- Categorizes (sorts) examples of three-dimensional shapes
- Constructs examples of simple symmetry and non-symmetry using concrete objects

Media & Technology

- Enjoys electronic forms of storybooks and informational texts
- Uses technology to explore and review information

Measurement & Data

- Becomes familiar with standard and nonstandard measuring tools and their uses
- Measures or compares the length of one or more objects using a nonstandard reference
- Measures or compares the weight of one or more objects using a nonstandard reference
- Measures or compares the height of one or more objects using a nonstandard reference
- Collects and sorts materials to be graphed
- Uses graphs and charts to answer questions
- Predicts the results of a data collection
- Explores the use and meaning of currency and coins
- Sequences familiar events in time

Spatial Relations

- Shows understanding of position words
- Describes relative position from different perspectives (e.g. “I am on top of a hill. You are below me.”)
- Understand and can tell the difference between orientation terms (e.g. horizontal, diagonal, vertical)
- Uses directions to move through space and find places in space (e.g. Simon Says...)

Operations & Algebraic Thinking

- Indicates there are more when combining sets of objects
- Indicates there are fewer when removing objects from a set
- Combines sets of objects to equal a set no larger than 10
- Removes objects from a set no larger than 10
- Uses concrete objects to solve complex problems

Health & Safety

- Identifies basic safety rules
- Demonstrates awareness of good nutritional practices
- Recognizes the danger of fire
- Discusses appropriate health and safety procedures

Creative Arts

- Explores visual materials and activities
- Shows care and persistence in a variety of art projects
- Creates original work
- Expresses self through movement
- Demonstrates ability to use movement and music
- Represents fantasy and real-life experiences through pretend play
- Participates in teacher-guided dramatic activities
- Engages in cooperative play with other children
- Uses oral language to describe or explain art

Social/Emotional Development

- Recognizes own first name
- Recognizes own first and last name
- Names family members and relationships
- Helps establish rules, routine
- Uses materials appropriately and puts them away
- Demonstrates increased flexibility, imagination, and inventiveness
- Demonstrates willingness to choose a variety of familiar and new experiences
- Works with others to solve problems
- Recognizes and identifies feelings

Physical Development

Fine Motor Skills

- Uses writing and drawing tools
- Coordinates hand and eye movements
- Demonstrates control, strength, and dexterity to manipulate objects

Gross Motor Skills

- Combines a sequence of large motor skills
- Distinguishes left from right
- Moves with balance and control

Science

Concepts

- Notices changes in living things over time
- Recognizes that living things have similar needs for water, food, and air
- Describes characteristics in the appearance and behavior of animals
- Explores the characteristics of the sun, moon, stars, and/or clouds
- Observes and describes weather and how it changes
- Explores simple machines
- Uses senses to explore
- Investigate states of matter (solids and liquids)
- Observes and describes various ways that objects move

Processes

- Shows curiosity by asking questions and seeking information
- Collects, describes, and records information
- Uses tools and equipment to explore objects
- Makes and verifies predictions
- Compares, contrasts, and classifies objects and data
- Participates in scientific investigations

Social Studies

Self & Community

- Recognizes his or her role as a member of a group
- Describes characteristics of where he or she lives and visits
- Investigates ways that people form a community
- Understands maps are representations of actual places
- Begins to categorize time intervals
- Becomes aware of common symbols in the community

Economics

- Demonstrates knowledge about community workers and their roles
- Demonstrates an awareness of the uses of money

Frequently Asked Questions

Sequence of Themes

Is it important to follow the sequence of themes in the order in which they are presented, or can they be presented in a different order?

The curriculum content and skill lessons are presented in a linear fashion, and we encourage you to follow the sequence in order. Concepts introduced or reinforced in later parts of the year are based on prior knowledge of content and skills introduced early on.

While the themes are presented in a specific order, they cannot always match seasonal events, since school start times vary. Some themes are scheduled to occur near certain times. (e.g., fire safety in October, fire safety month). Rather than skip ahead to the weekly lesson plans for these themes, we encourage you to incorporate some of your own ideas and plans. Doing so will provide prior knowledge and information as well as the opportunity to review the content when the theme is addressed in sequence.

Sequence of Letters

How did you decide on the order for teaching letters and sounds?

The sequence of letter introductions is determined by the most frequently encountered letters and sounds, placing similar letter sounds apart from each other, and giving the ability to blend early sounds together to form words. During the first four weeks, no individual letters are introduced. Rather, an overview of all letters is presented. Specifically those which occur in the children's names. Beginning with Week Five, one letter/sound is featured per week. We encourage you to follow the sequence of letter introduction, as previously introduced letters/sounds are reviewed and reinforced with the introduction of each new letter/sound. However, any activity related to letter/sounds formally introduced or not yet introduced is encouraged!

Holidays, Special Events, Days off from school

Often we have a four day week. How can I fit five days of plans into a four day week?

This is always a challenge! Day Five of each week is a review day with no new skills or concepts introduced. Rather than skipping Day Five, look carefully at the week's activities and incorporate some of them into the following week. It is not essential for you to complete a week's worth of plans in one school week. You may wish to carry over some activities to the next week.

Lesson Plan Schedule

I'm not sure I can follow the daily lesson plan schedule due to specials. Can I rearrange time blocks?

We are aware that every school/center has schedule challenges! Some schools provide special pull out sessions for physical education, art, etc, and you must follow the school's daily time line. The Starfall lesson plan schedule reflects blocks of time typical in preschools such as morning meeting time, story time, circle time, and center time. These time blocks may be rearranged to suit your schedule needs. However, we do encourage you to follow the lesson order in sequence. It is preferential to extend a week's plan to the next week, rather than skip or eliminate a lesson. We are confident that teachers can make thoughtful modifications.

Learning Center Time

I noticed there are no small group pull out times during Learning Centers. I've always done this in the past and it has worked well for me. Can I pull small groups during this time?

It does seem reasonable to pull groups out of learning center time since children are engaged and it provides an opportunity for the teacher to work with small groups while the others are working in centers. We believe a crucial opportunity is lost when teachers do this! Learning Centers offer the most valuable educational time for purposeful observation during the day. If teachers are busy pulling children from groups and focusing on directing lessons, they miss valuable opportunities to engage with and encourage the children. Learning center time becomes mere busywork, allowing teachers to conduct small group time, but also causing teachers to lose a rich opportunity to actively facilitate and observe the children.

We realize that working with small groups of children is essential, and for that reason we have included a special block of time called Exploration. During Exploration time, children engage in activities while the teacher pulls small groups. It's the best of both worlds! Teachers can be an active part of Learning Center time, while also having time later to pull children for small group sessions.

Music

I see that Starfall has included three music CD's with the program. I have many different songs that I have used from other sources or publishers. Can I still use those songs?

Absolutely! We encourage you to use as much music as possible! The songs provided by Starfall are related to themes and activities. Feel free to substitute your own songs at any time. Copyright restrictions limit the songs we can provide.

Literature

I noticed you do not include some of the classic stories in your program and that sometimes you only incorporate one story per week. Can I use additional literature to supplement the program?

Starfall has produced many fiction and nonfiction stories, and has rewritten many traditional fairy tales, folk tales, and fables for the pre-k program. We strongly encourage you to incorporate the classic stories and additional quality literature as often as you can! During story time, you may occasionally want to substitute one of your favorite books and develop the skill/concept addressed that day around your story. You can never read too much to children!

Warm Up Your Brain

Is it important to always begin the Morning Meeting time with the "Warm Up Your Brain" activity or can I skip that?

Research shows that children are getting less and less exercise. It also shows that engaging both sides of the brain during movement helps children to better focus and engage in the activities. The "Warm up Your Brain" activities were carefully chosen to assist children in accessing both sides of their brains, creating brain patterns, and developing core strength, which improve large and small motor skills and provide opportunities for movement. These activities are especially beneficial for children with special needs, such as those with sensory integration issues or poor small motor control. We actually encourage you to incorporate these quick exercises throughout the day as transitional activities and as the children's needs require.

ESL and Special Needs

How does the curriculum address English language learners and children with special needs?

The curriculum was designed to address English language learners and children with special needs by incorporating rich language development, and all modalities of learning (visual, auditory, kinesthetic) throughout the program. *Starfall.com* has free activities that can be used by children at school and home to review and reinforce many phonics and phonemic awareness skills. A *Starfall.com* membership adds more opportunities to practice phonemic awareness, phonics AND math skills. We have found this is an invaluable tool for English language learners as well as children with special learning needs. The Starfall curriculum includes use of *Starfall.com* on a daily basis.

In addition, we have designed Day Five as a review day with no small group sessions planned. Use time during Exploration to pull special needs groups for emphasizing specific areas in which reinforcement is needed.

Remember, pre-K is a time to expose children to basic skills. Due to varying levels of readiness and development, one should not expect mastery at this time. Pre-K is a springboard for success in kindergarten. While some children will master all the skills set forth, others will not. Our primary goals are to introduce kindergarten concepts, and to develop and motivate successful life-long learners.

Assessments

Our school offers VPK and we have specific objectives and assessments to address. How does your curriculum align with this program?

The Starfall standards and benchmarks were designed to address the VPK (Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten), Head Start, and UPK (Universal Pre-Kindergarten) programs as well as to be reflective of many state pre-K standards. Sample observation forms and assessments which reflect those used in these specific programs are included with Starfall Pre-K. We realize that many districts have required assessment and observation forms. Please modify or adapt the assessment/observation included to meet your specific needs. We encourage you to develop individual portfolios for each child to include samples of their work, observation notations, and assessment checklists.

Authors & Credits



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39-year veteran kindergarten teacher in St. Petersburg, Florida, at Holy Family Catholic School; serving on the Florida Catholic Conference Accreditation team since 2001; former director of several daycare centers in Baltimore, Maryland.



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Starfall.com is brought to you by a dedicated group of artists, musicians, and engineers. To learn more about us, visit: <http://more.starfall.com/info/about.php>

A Brief History

Starfall.com opened September 2002 with a mission to ensure children have fun learning to read. Shortly after its launch, teachers worldwide wrote to tell us how the website successfully motivated their students. A few teachers, including our principal writers Joan Elliott and Pam Ferguson, described how they had created lesson plans leveraging the excitement Starfall had created in their classrooms. Joan's message proclaimed, ***"By year's end, all of my kindergarten students were reading!"***

Impressed by their enthusiasm and success, we enlisted Joan and Pam to help us create a complete kindergarten reading and language arts curriculum. The effort involved a task force of over 150 volunteer teachers, 50 schools, and over 5,000 students across the United States. We proudly released Starfall Kindergarten in 2009 alongside membership content on *Starfall.com*.

Due to the success of the kindergarten curriculum, we received numerous requests to create a Pre-K program, the Starfall way. In 2009, Starfall embarked upon developing a complete Pre-K curriculum. Pre-K teachers around the country volunteered to pilot the program in public and private schools, day care centers, and homeschools. These teachers embraced the curriculum and provided excellent feedback, ensuring the program uses what works based on practical real-world experience.

Starfall Pre-K was released in July of 2013, and is offered to schools and parents at an extremely low price.



Starfall gratefully acknowledges the following teachers who piloted Starfall Pre-K, and actively contributed to its development:

- **Brooke Mack**, Williamsburg Elementary School, Williamsburg, KY
- **Cathy Trumbull**, Sacred Heart Interparochial School, Pinellas Park, FL
- **Daphne Bordelon**, Sale International Studies Magnet School, Columbus, MS
- **Dolores Gracia**, Benavides Elementary School, Brownsville, TX
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