

At garage sales Bickering can be fun

The bickering, bargaining, bizarre bazaar atmosphere common to most garage sales can be a boon to careful shoppers, consumer experts say.

"It's not like the regular marketplace where most prices are carved in stone," says Marilyn Gurevsky of the Ontario Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations (MCCR). "Garage sales give you the chance to haggle; to pay what you can afford or what an item is worth to you. They - along with auctions, bazaars and other secondary markets - fill a real need in our system. They're also fun."

Every summer, box loads of cast-off clothes, mismatched china, inappropriate wedding gifts and assorted other denizens of cluttered closets are dragged back to useful life via driveway retail.

According to Ms. Gurevsky, the ministry doesn't get many consumer complaints about garage sale purchases. Largely, she believes, because people understand the "as is" nature of the deals.

"Unlike when they are buying from stores, most people inspect garage-sale merchandise carefully," Ms. Gurevsky says. "They realize they can't take things back even if they're broken. That doesn't mean sellers can legally lie to you about the condition of their merchandise, but considering the cost of most items compared with the expense and aggravation of going to court, what you buy is what you get."

That's why it's a good idea to test any questionable items before buying, she says. This is particularly true for large items such as major appliances.

Safety is another concern when buying second-hand goods. The Canadian Standards Association

(CSA) recently published a warning to consumers about purchasing used electrical appliances.

The CSA bulletin cited a number of accidents involving garage-sale purchases. In one case, an eight-year-old boy narrowly escaped injury when an electric blanket caught fire. Bought at a garage sale, the blanket turned out to be 28 years old and insulation on the internal wiring had severely deteriorated.

"The dangers inherent in buying used appliances are many - you don't know how old they are, what abuse they have taken, what servicing has been done or the condition of the electrical components," association spokesmen say. "Another point to consider is that newer products may be certified to new or revised standards which make them safer to use."

To avoid dangers, consumer and safety experts advise having appliances checked out by a repair shop before use. Keep that in mind when buying, as the added cost of this service could make garage sale appliance "bargains" prohibitively expensive.

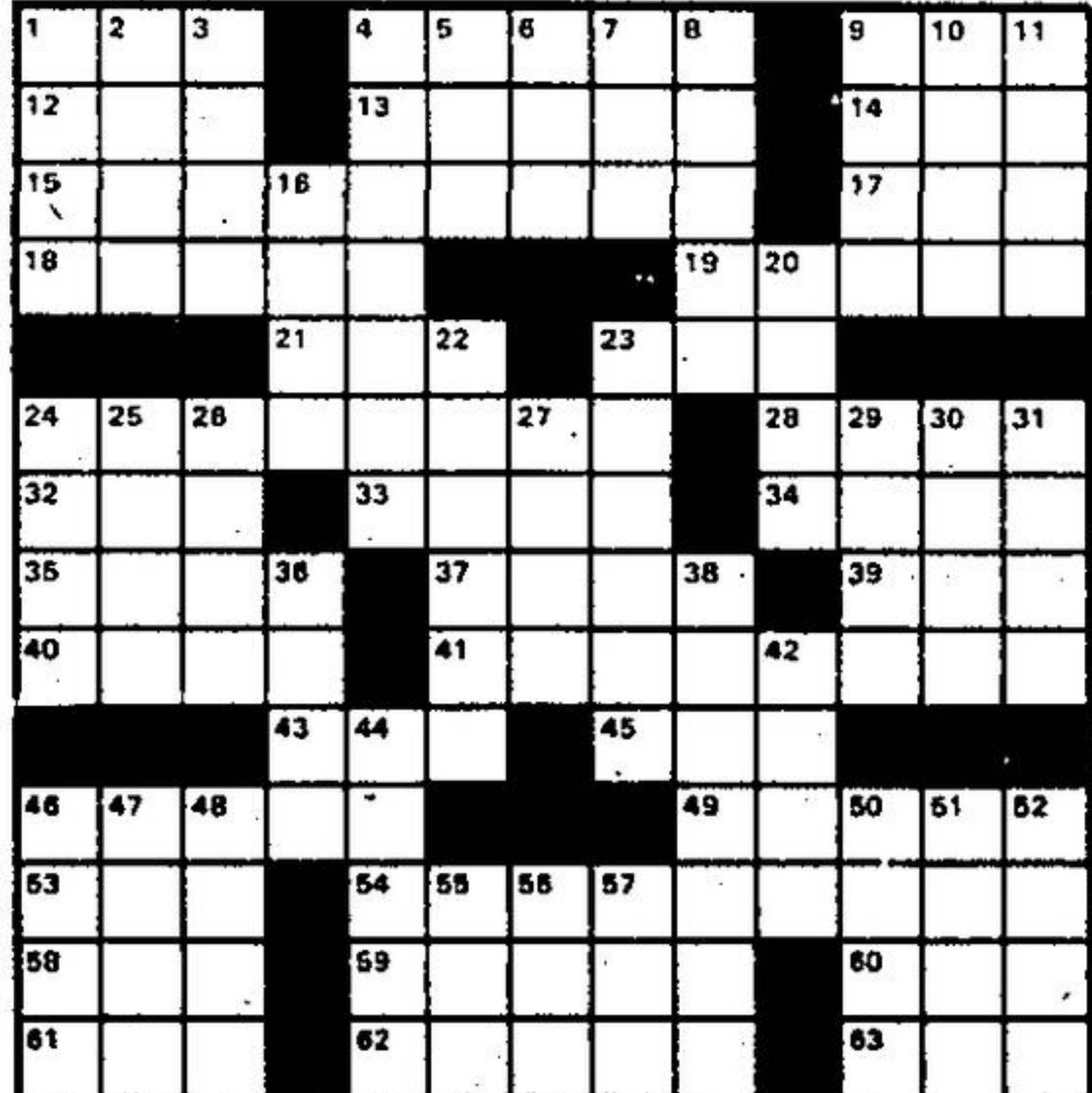
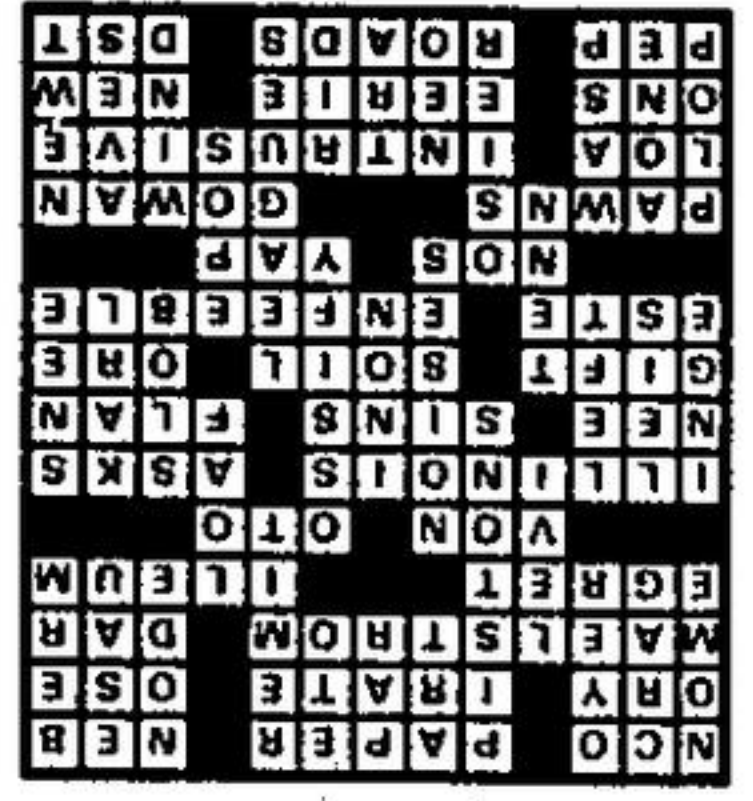
Some used items should be avoided entirely, except by highly knowledgeable consumers, Ms.

Gurevsky warns. These include many child-care products, such as cribs, car seats, baby gates, playpens, hockey helmets, face protectors, children's clothing and similar merchandise. Safety standards for these items are continually updated and it's difficult to know whether an older model conforms to current requirements.

In fact, it is illegal to market any products not meeting mandatory safety standards. Garage-sale operators would be wise to avoid selling questionable items.

General information on consumer rights and responsibilities in Ontario is available from the Consumer Information Centre at 555 Yonge Street, Toronto, Ontario M7A 2H6 - (416) 963-1111 or toll free at 1-800-268-1142. Ontario residents with an 807 area code may call the 416 number collect. The TTY/TDD line for the hearing/speech impaired is (416) 963-0808.

- ACROSS**
- 1 Sgt.
 - 4 Writing sheet
 - 9 Bird's beak
 - 12 Jazz player
 - 13 Kid
 - 14 Furious
 - 14 Gravel ridge
 - 15 Whirlpool
 - 17 Women's patriotic soc.
 - 18 White-plumed heron
 - 19 Part of small intestine
 - 21 Erich _____ Stroheim
 - 23 Ear (comb. form)
 - 24 Prairie State
 - 28 Requests
 - 32 By birth
 - 33 Evils
 - 34 Custard
 - 35 Donation
 - 37 Earth
 - 39 Prospector's find
 - 40 This (Sp.)
 - 41 Weaken
 - 43 Numbers (abbr.)
- DOWN**
- 1 Seaport in Alaska
 - 2 Precipice
 - 3 Court hearing
 - 4 Detroit team
 - 5 Skill
 - 6 Equality
 - 7 WWII area
 - 8 Send in payment
 - 9 Rounded lump
 - 10 Jacob's twin
 - 11 Highway shoulder
 - 16 Jacob's son
 - 20 Laze
 - 22 Sounds
 - 23 Change into bone
 - 24 Author of "Picnic"
 - 25 Hilo garlands
 - 26 Gone
 - 27 _____ the ground floor
 - 29 Stuppy person
 - 30 Actor _____ Malden
 - 31 Cut
 - 36 Between N.C. and Ark.
 - 38 Organizations
 - 42 Long heroic poem
 - 44 Willow
 - 46 Wet falling sound
 - 47 First-rate (2 wds.)
 - 48 Buzzing insect
 - 50 Coil
 - 51 Bird class
 - 52 Small lizard
 - 55 New (pref.)
 - 56 Singing syllable
 - 57 Free



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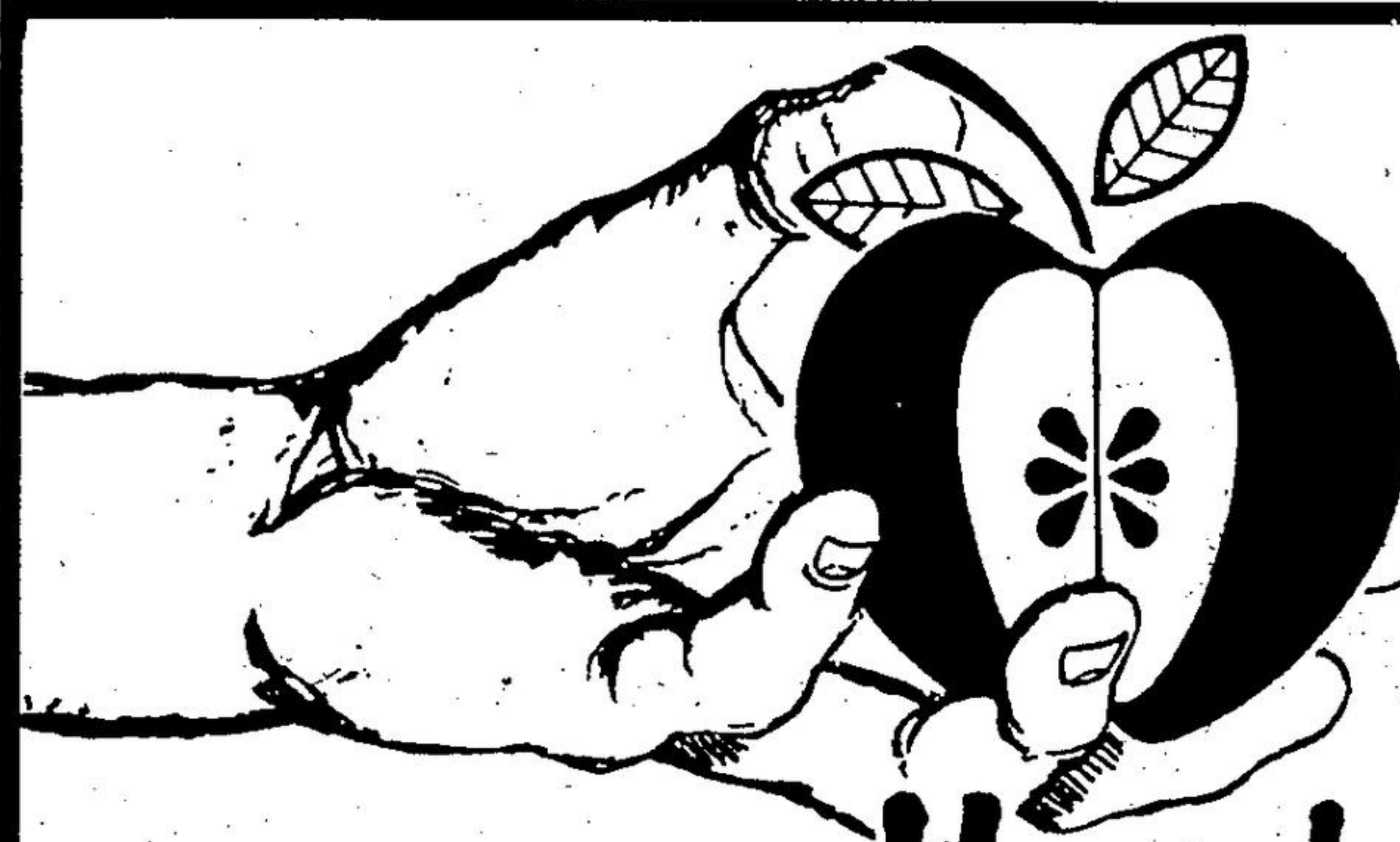
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