I Just Brought Home My GDA Pup In Training! Now What Do I Do?

Whether this is your first puppy or twenty-first you are probably amazed by the boundless energy and indescribable cuteness of this new little pup. But as adorable as he is, it is your job now to focus that endless energy in the right direction and get this guide dog pup in training off on the right paw.

It's Never Too Soon To Start Training

Your pup is learning almost every minute of every day. But is he learning what you want him to learn or what **he** wants to learn? It is time to start teaching him what you expect of him and to give him some rules and boundaries.

When you first arrive home with your pup, take him on leash to an outside relieving area where you want him to "get busy." Encourage him to "get busy" and praise him heartily if he relieves. Be sure not to overly excite or play with your dog during his relieving time as this may distract him from the task at hand. When you feel he is finished, or you have given him ample time to relieve, take him into his new home. Keep him on leash or carry him so he doesn't just run amuck and get overly stimulated. He must learn manners in the house.

Manage your pup's environment. Remember your pup is just a baby. He needs guidance to keep him safe and management to keep your house and furniture in one piece. Set your pup up for success by puppy proofing your house:

- *Close doors to rooms he does not need explore.
- *Use baby gates or exercise pens to block areas that are off limits.
- *Pick up and put away items that may be tempting or harmful to your pup.
- *Put things out of reach that could potentially be broken or chewed.
- *Remove rugs that may be ruined by a potty accident.

This redecoration is only temporary and will not only help your pup's training but may save your sanity! Later, when your pup has matured and is more trustworthy, you can put your house back together.

Housetraining and Schedules

Once you are a bit settled at home you will need to establish a schedule for your pup to continue teaching good habits and to help housetrain him. Housetraining your puppy simply means teaching your pup where you would like him to relieve. Your pup already knows **how** to relieve himself, we now want to teach him **where** to do it (preferably not on the living room carpet). By using ample amounts of supervision, consistency, and positive reinforcement you can housetrain your pup with ease.

Start Off On The Right Paw

As with all desired behaviors, it is easiest to teach your dog what you want rather than scolding him for doing what you don't want. Begin by designating a specific area for your dog to relieve himself. You will be guiding your pup on leash to this same area frequently to "get busy." The odor left from his previous visits to this area will quickly mark it as his place to relieve. Whenever he relieves in this designated area, praise him heartily.

Also, be sure that you go outside with your pup for his relieving time so that you can praise him for what he has done. If you just put your pup outside by himself for a few minutes then let him back in, you will have no idea if he has relieved or not. That is until he squats on the living room carpet!

Consistency is key to training your pup. When taking him outside to relieve, use the same door each time. By doing so you are creating a routine and your pup will learn to associate that door with going outside. In the coming months, your pup will hopefully be able to indicate to you by going to that door that he needs to go out and relieve himself.

Timing Is Everything

A 6-8 week old puppy should be taken outside to relieve every one to three hours during the day. Most puppies should be taken out:

- * After waking in the morning
- * After naps
- * After meals
- * After playing or training
- * When you return home and puppy has been left alone
- * Just before being put to bed for the night (Even if he has been asleep for a while, wake him and take him outside one last time before bed.)

Eliminating On Command

You can teach your pup to eliminate on command by repeating a unique command each time he is in the act of eliminating. Simply repeat "get busy" in an upbeat tone of voice while relieving him. Be sure not to overly excite or play with your pup during his relieving time as this may distract him from the task at hand. After a few weeks of training your pup will understand that this word or phrase means to get to business.

Also, please be sure to remove your puppy's GDA bib or jacket before allowing him to relieve himself. When the bib or jacket is on we want the dogs to think of this as 'working' and to be under control in public. Later in training the dogs will be expected not to relieve while in harness either.

Feeding and Watering Schedule

By controlling your puppy's feeding and watering schedule you will have some control over when he needs to eliminate.

- * Put your pup on a consistent feeding schedule of 3 meals a day. It is best to spread the 3 meals throughout the day to allow adequate time for digestion and relieving in between.
- * Schedule your pup's feeding times so that you will be able to let him out after eating.
- * Avoid giving your pup a large meal or big drink of water just prior to confining him or he may have to eliminate when you are not around to take him out.
- * Allow your pup only 15 minutes to eat his food, then remove it. Giving your pup free access to food all day will make it more difficult to predict when he needs to eliminate.
- * The last feeding of the day should be completed several hours before confinement for the night.
- * To avoid excessive "filling up" you may want to pick up your pup's water bowl about 2-3 hours before putting him in his crate for the night.

Supervision is the Key To Prevent Mistakes

Left on his own, an untrained puppy is likely to make a mistake. Close supervision is a very important part of training. Again, by puppy proofing your home you will reduce your pup's opportunities for mistakes. Your pup should constantly be within eyesight - if he is out of sight he is most likely getting into trouble.

Baby gates can be helpful to control your puppy's access throughout the house and to aid supervision. Or keep your pup on leash in the house and move him from room to room with you. You can tether him with a cable tie-down to a strong piece of furniture in the room you are in. Give him something appropriate to chew on and never leave him tethered unattended. For example, while working on the computer, tether him to your desk at your feet. This way you can keep an eye on him and still get things done.

When you are away from home, sleeping, or if you are just too busy to monitor your dog's activities, confine him to a small, safe area in your home or put him in his crate.

Don't Make Things Worse

When those inevitable relieving mistakes occur be ready to handle the problem.

* Do not correct or punish your pup for a mistake unless you catch him in the act of eliminating. An appropriate correction consists of providing a moderate, startling distraction such as a sharp noise to hopefully stop the behavior. You can then quickly usher your puppy outside to his proper relieving area so he can hopefully finish his business and you can praise him for a job well done.

- * If you find a mistake that occurred previously, in other words you did not witness the act, do not punish your pup. Rubbing a puppy's nose in his mess is an inappropriate way to housetrain. He will not understand what you are punishing him for and may become afraid of you. Instead, vow to be more diligent and supervise your dog more closely.
- * Urine and fecal odor should be thoroughly removed to keep your puppy from returning to areas of the home where he made a mess.

Some Useful Tools

- * For removing urine and fecal odors try "Nature's Miracle" by Pets N People, Inc. You can find it at most pet stores ask for it by name.
- * Always have an adequate supply of poop bags to clean up after your dog at home and when out and about. Don't leave home without one!
- * A rolled up newspaper can be used when housetraining. If you discover a mess your pup has created while you were not paying attention you can use this newspaper to smack yourself over the head while repeating, "I will supervise my dog more closely! I will watch him constantly!" Then proceed to clean up the mess thoroughly.

Success

The basic principles of housetraining are pretty simple, but a fair amount of patience is required. The most challenging part is always keeping an eye on your active puppy. If you maintain control, take your pup outdoors frequently, and consistently praise the desired behavior, soon you should have a housetrained canine companion.

Crate Training

One of the most valuable training tools you should use for your puppy is a crate. A crate for your pup is just like a playpen or crib for a baby. It is a safe place for your puppy to sleep and relax when you are not able to supervise him. As a guide dog puppy in training it is important for your pup to learn how to be in a crate as this tool will be used throughout his training and possibly during his career as a working guide.

Most puppies learn quite quickly to enjoy spending time in their crates. Dogs are naturally den animals and like to sleep in small enclosed spaces. You will help to teach your pup that this is his place and help him understand that the crate is a good thing, not punishment.

If your pup has not been in a crate before, you can start to introduce it to him by placing his dinner inside and allowing him to eat his meal there with the door open. Since most pups love to eat, this will help him associate his crate with good things. Later you will be putting your puppy to sleep for the night in the crate. After your pup has relieved for the last time at night just usher him into his crate for bedtime. Sounds easy enough, right? Well, not quite.

Your pup will probably cry and howl for a while as he is a bit confused and not yet used to his new sleeping place. But one of the most important lessons you can teach him is that

he does not get let out of his crate if he is crying and carrying on. It is best to simply ignore this protesting and he will soon quiet down and fall asleep for the night. If you give in to his barking and crying in the crate and allow him out he will quickly learn 'how' to get your attention and that he is the leader of this relationship. And good luck getting him back into the crate once he's out!

In the morning, if your pup is excitedly barking from his crate, "Hurry up! I need to go outside!" certainly you want to get him to his relieving area as quickly as possible. But try to get him to quiet down for just a moment before letting him out of his crate. Whistle, make a quick sound, tap on the crate, something to get your pup to hush for a second then you can quickly get him outside to "get busy." Again, you are teaching him that he only gets let out of his crate when he is quiet.

If your pup cries in the middle of the night he may need to go outside to relieve. Most young pups cannot sleep through the night just yet and will still need an opportunity to "get busy" before morning. This is another benefit of the crate as puppies tend to be clean animals and will not want to soil their sleeping area. So your pup will alert you when he is in his crate and needs to go outside to relieve. This is helpful in your housetraining as your pup is learning to hold it as well as to alert you when it's time to "get busy." So don't ignore that cry from the crate at 3am. Simply take your pup outside to "get busy" then put him back into his crate to finish his sleep for the night. This is not play time. Be sure that he attends to his business, give him some gentle praise and then everyone back to bed! With consistency, hopefully these middle of the night potty breaks will become fewer and farther between in the coming weeks.

It is important to place your puppy's crate near your sleeping place, ideally in your bedroom, so you can hear your pup if he needs to go out in the middle of the night. Also, your pup might settle down more quickly if he can be near you while sleeping, as he is used to sleeping with his littermates. Dogs are pack animals and would rather be with someone than alone. Since we are training these pups to be companions, it would be beneficial for them to learn to sleep calmly near you at a young age to help the bonding process.

Aside from sleeping at night, the crate is also useful anytime that you can not supervise your puppy. If you are unable to watch your puppy you must put him somewhere that he can not get into trouble such as a crate, exercise pen, or in a small safe area that is gated-off. If you need to go out for a few hours during the day, you can put your pup in his crate. Give him a pacifier bone or toy (refer to appropriate toys later in handout) to keep him busy while you are gone. When you return, take him immediately outside to "get busy." If you need to take a shower or prepare dinner without interruptions, you can put your pup in his crate. But if your family is going to Disneyland for the day, this is too long for your puppy to be crated. It is best to find a puppy sitter to take care of your pup for the day. (Contact the GDA Puppy Department for puppy sitter information.)

How much time should my puppy spend in his crate? Your pup should be spending the majority of his time with you of course. But crate skills are important as well so aside from sleeping at night a few hours during the day would be ideal. No more than 2-3 hours at time, depending upon the age of your pup. The younger the pup the shorter the intervals should be between relieving times.

Your puppy's crate is a valuable tool for his training and your sanity. When used correctly, the crate can aid in our housetraining regime and provides a safe place to corral our pups when we can't supervise them, which prevents dangerous and unwanted mistakes.

Playbiting and Mouthing - Canine or Piranha?

Along with your puppy's boundless energy come very sharp needle-like puppy teeth that seem to never stop moving. If you haven't been around a puppy recently, you may have forgotten about this stage of puppyhood, but it is very normal puppy behavior. Puppies bite because that is how they play and explore their world. If you watch puppies play together, they spend the majority of their time biting each other. Now, without his littermates, your pup is probably looking to you for playtime and inevitably he will put his mouth on your skin.

While this playbiting and mouthing is normal puppy behavior, it is important to teach your puppy that it is not appropriate to bite and chew on human skin - for obvious reasons, Ouch! So, you must provide many other approved outlets for his chewing and biting enjoyment. Such as appropriate toys, nylabones, Kong toys, frozen toys, sterilized bones, pressed rawhide bones, etc. Get creative, as long as it is safe your puppy. Remember you have to teach him what is appropriate to chew on, and what is not.

You must also be careful not to reinforce your puppy for biting you. Your attention is a very strong reinforcer, so if your pup learns that every time he bites, you yell and scream and grab him, he will think that you are playing with him and may get even more excited. Instead, plan ahead. If you are going to pet or play with your pup, have several toys and bones within arms length so that you can redirect his biting and chewing to an appropriate item. Then praise him calmly. Dogs feed off of our energy so if you act wildly with your pup, using a high pitched tone of voice, flailing your hands about, of course your puppy will be excited and difficult to calm down. Try to act calmly with your puppy and teach him to settle when you handle him. Always supervise young children with your puppy to encourage proper behavior from both the kids and the puppy. And if all else fails and your puppy is over-stimulated and biting, get up and walk away. Teach your pup that if he acts too wildly, then the play ends.

Your puppy will start teething at about 3 months of age. At this stage he will loose his sharp needle-like teeth and begin getting his adult teeth. You may notice a few lost teeth or some blood on a chew toy. Again, this is normal. Continue to provide your pup with plenty of appropriate chew toys and bones. Frozen items may feel good on his gums. But remain diligent -

Teach Your Pup His Name

You will want to start teaching your puppy his name so he knows you are talking to him. We talk all day long and our dogs learn to tune out the majority of our chit chat. But how do our dogs know when to pay attention to us and listen to what we are saying? When we call them by name of course! So spend some time teaching your new puppy this important word. His name is going to be his clue that he needs to listen up and respond to what you are asking of him. When you give your dog a command you will use his name first so he knows you're talking to him. "Juno, sit!"

Use your puppy's name frequently in an upbeat tone of voice that gets his attention. Praise him when he looks to you after you've said his name. At this time your pup understands more how you say things as opposed to what you are saying. Tone of voice is important and for most of us a happy bright tone comes naturally when we talk to our adorable puppies. So keep your voice intonation in mind when talking to your pup.

You can also play the "name game" to help teach your pup his name. To do this, take a piece of your pup's kibble between your thumb and forefinger. When your pup is distracted (looking elsewhere) take the kibble to his nose and let him get a whiff of it. Then say his name "Juno" as you lure him toward you with the kibble. Give him the kibble and praise him. Try this 5-6 times in a row several times a day and he should learn his name quite quickly. Just remember to keep the kibble low so that your pup doesn't learn to jump up. By associating your pup's name with positive things and being consistent you can teach your pup this important command in no time!

*Note: Please use the proper name that your puppy has been assigned by GDA. This is your pup's official name and will be used by several different people within the program throughout his life and working career. So to minimize confusion for your dog, please avoid using nicknames or shortening the name unless otherwise approved by the Puppy Department. Thanks!

Teach Your Pup How To Sit

Along with teaching your puppy his name you should also begin teaching him how to sit when asked. Think of the sit command as your dog's way of saying "please." Before giving your pup something that he wants, he must first sit and practice good manners. For example, you will have your pup sit before feeding him. Since you are feeding him three times a day right now, you can at least practice this three times a day. At feeding time, take a kibble out of your pup's bowl and hold it between your thumb and forefinger. Bend down in front of your pup and let him sniff the kibble in your fingers. Then slowly move the kibble up over your pup's head. As

your puppy looks up he will eventually have to put his butt on the ground into the sit position. As soon as he sits let him eat the kibble and praise him. Good dog! Try to keep the kibble close to your pup's head not high in the air as this will just encourage him to jump up. Take your time and practice this several times if possible to lure your puppy into the sit position. Once he has completed a few repetitions, you can introduce the command, "Juno, sit." Be sure to use his name first so he knows you are talking to him, and then the command 'sit' once and only once. Before giving him the rest of his meal from his bowl, also have him sit. You are probably going to have to help your puppy into this position for several meals until he gets the hang of the command. But be sure that he sits every time before mealtime and soon you will have a polite puppy who is sitting at your feet waiting for his bowl.

Another method you can use to teach your puppy to sit is to simply hold him by the collar with one hand and guide him into the sit position with your other hand. While you are doing this ask him "Juno, sit" and praise him when he is sitting. This method requires a more hands on approach but again with lots of repetition and consistency he can learn this command.

Continue to practice the sit command whenever possible. Your pup should learn to sit for petting, before greeting you and your friends or family members who enter the house, and any other time he wants something. Do not reward your pup for jumping up on you. Once he has learned the sit command well, teach him that he has to sit before getting any attention. If he's sitting he can't be jumping.

Come When Called

You can also begin teaching your puppy to come when called. At this young age puppies tend to want to follow us around the majority of the time so use this to help train him to come to you when you call. For now, just simply use your pup's name to get his attention and to come to you. Use your pup's name in an upbeat tone of voice so you sound fun and exciting and he will be curious to check out what you are doing. First try this fairly close to your pup so he can be successful. Call his name "Juno!" and quickly move backwards, encouraging him to chase you. When he responds and comes running to you praise him heartily and then release him. Try it again once he has turned away from you. Don't go too far from him yet as he is still learning his name. When he starts getting good at this game you can kind of play hide and seek with him. Walk around a corner of your house where your pup can not see you and call his name. If he does not respond try to clap or whistle to get his attention and when he finds you, move backwards so he can chase you and praise him heartily.

Another exercise you can try involves two people. Each of you take a few pieces of kibble and move about 6 feet apart. One person calls the pup "Juno!" and if needed lets him sniff the kibble. Quickly move backwards as the pup comes to you. Give a kibble and praise him for coming when you called. Now you must ignore the pup while the other person does the same.

Walk toward the pup, let him sniff the kibble, call his name and then move backwards and lure him to you. Good dog! Keep calling him back and forth making it more difficult as needed. Be sure to end the game before your pup gets bored. Keep your training sessions short to ensure that your pup will be interested next time. This can be a fun game for you and your dog and can help tire him out too!

Teach Your Pup the Down Command

Once your puppy has learned how to sit you can start to teach him the down command. Down means to lay down on the ground. Please do not use this command in other situations such as if your pup has jumped on you or your furniture - that command should be "off." Try to be clear and not confuse your pup.

To get your puppy to lie down - again, take a kibble in between your thumb and forefinger and have him "sit." Then using the kibble as a lure take it from your pup's nose to his toes then slowly out in front of him, as if you are making the letter L with your kibble. Your pup should follow the kibble and slowly lay on the ground. As soon as your pup's elbows have hit the ground open up your fingers and give him the kibble. Good dog! You are simply teaching your pup that if he lays down he gets to have that kibble he followed. If your pup pops up out of his sit position, then simply start again and take your time. It will take several repetitions for your puppy to get it. After he has successfully completed a few sequences then you can begin using the command, "Juno, down." Once and only once. Name and then command. Help your puppy into position and praise him.

Try to practice "down" on different surfaces. Some puppies prefer to lay down on carpet or grass and some pups will lay down easily on hardwood or tile floors. Whatever works and can help you to successfully teach your puppy this command. Practice this command at mealtimes too. Your puppy can "sit" and "down" before his dinner!

If you are having any difficulty with these commands or have any questions at all please do not hesitate to call the GDA Puppy Department and we will help you!

*Note: Kibble is only to be used in the early stages of teaching your puppy the basic commands. Also please only use your dog's kibble from his meals at feeding time to practice these commands. It may be more difficult to get your puppy on a housetraining schedule if he is eating kibble throughout the day. Please only use kibble for training while at home. Your pup expects to get fed at home, not out in public, so only use the food lure training with kibble when at home. Once your pup understands these commands well you will want to wean him off of the kibble - usually by 5 months of age. Your pup will continue to earn physical and verbal praise from you for a job well done but will no longer need to be lured into position with the kibble.

Playing With Your Pup and Exercise

One of the most important things you can do to set your puppy up for success is to make sure that he gets plenty of exercise and physical stimulation. Your young pup has boundless energy and if you don't provide him with several opportunities to use this energy in a constructive way he will almost certainly get into trouble doing things you don't want him to do.

Exercise is your responsibility. Simply shoving your pup into the backyard and saying "go play" is not enough. He will probably just try to figure out how to get back into the house to spend time with you anyway. So get creative and find some fun ways to tire out your puppy.

All of the commands we have discussed in this handout are great ways to exercise your puppy. Pups can benefit not only from physical stimulation but mental stimulation as well. So practice their commands daily. Train in short intervals but often. Maybe 5 minutes in the morning, a couple of commands before lunch, a few more minutes near dinner time and even a couple of sits and downs in the evening. Spread it out and make it fun for your dog.

Pups love to play. Try tossing a toy for him and encourage him to chase it. If he is interested in the game try to ask him to "sit" before you toss the toy again. Now you're playing and training! You can also try playing hide and seek with your puppy. When he isn't looking at you, call his name and run and hide. In the beginning don't go too far and make it easy. When he finds you, praise him, play with him and give him a kibble. This is exercise, fun and he is learning to come when called. These are just a couple of ideas to help you exercise your puppy. I'm sure you can think of dozens of others and as you get to know your pup better you will learn what activities prefers. Remember, a tired pup is a good pup so save your sanity and exercise and train your puppy each day.

Appropriate Toys For Your Puppy

There are hundreds of different toys on the market for dogs these days and it can be difficult to know what toys are appropriate for your puppy. Many toys sold in stores are not exactly safe for pups and are simply created to appeal to us dog owners. That being said a good rule of thumb is to always supervise your young puppy with any new toy. Those sharp needle teeth can tear apart many things with ease and we don't want your pup to swallow anything he shouldn't. So, what should you allow your pup to play with?

* Kong toys are bell-shaped, hollow and have holes at each end. They are made out of a very durable rubber and can be a fun toy to toss for your pup or can be used as a pacifier type toy to entertain your pup when you have to leave him alone. You can stuff your pup's Kong with some kibble and he will then have to work to figure out how to get it out. This can provide entertainment for your puppy when you need a bit of a break. You can also give him his Kong before putting him is his crate when you have to leave him for an hour or two. Kongs are also dishwasher safe so they are easy to clean.

- * Nylabones are made out of a durable plastic and can be useful as a teething toy for young puppy's sore teeth and gums. They come in several shapes, sizes and flavors and are more for gnawing-on than eating. As your pup grows, you will want to get rid of a nylabone that is too small to decrease any risk of choking.
- * Hollow, sterilized bones can also be a good toy for pup's to gnaw-on to help soothe their teeth and gums. These bones can splinter so supervise your pup when he is chewing one and throw away any small sharp pieces. Also, do not toss these bones for your dog as they can break on hard surfaces.
- * Rope toys can be fun for your pup to chase when you throw them. Some dogs like to use rope toys when playing with other dogs. Also monitor your puppy when playing with a rope toy so he does not swallow rope pieces.
- * Plush toys and stuffed animals for dogs are quite popular at most pet stores. Please be sure to supervise your puppy when he is playing with these type of soft toys. Some puppies will shred plush toys very quickly and try to eat the stuffing and squeaker inside the toy. This of course can be quite dangerous for your pup. Other pups love to play and carry plush toys around and can find these soft toys to be quite comforting. So watch your pup and be careful with these easy-to-destroy toys.
- * Pressed rawhide bones can be useful to help a teething puppy exercise his jaws. Pressed rawhide bones are firmer and more dense than the more common regular white knotted rawhides and can take a bit longer for your pup to chew. These bones are only to be given to your pup when you can closely supervise him to make sure he will not choke or swallow it whole. If your puppy tends to finish this type of bone too fast, it may not be the right toy to give him. This bone can be useful to give your puppy to chew on while you are brushing him to help keep his teeth off of you and the brush. But always give this bone with your supervision not when your pup is left alone.

You can find these items at most pet stores, in pet catalogs and websites. As you get to know your puppy, you will figure out what he enjoys playing with and how he likes to play.

* Please do not allow your puppy to play with Frisbees or tennis balls. We do not want your pup to become overly-obsessed with these items as your dog will later have to work around these distractions throughout his career as a guide dog. Also, do not offer old shoes or socks to your pup as chew toys. He will not be able to differentiate between old shoes and new ones and will not understand that all shoes are not fair game. Use common sense when offering toys to your puppy to avoid choking hazards and easily swallowed items that could make your pup sick.

Other Important GDA Puppy Raiser Information

- * Your puppy should wear a collar and identification tags at all times. Your young puppy will need to get used to his new collar. He may scratch at the new collar for the first few days but he will quickly become accustomed to wearing it. Along with your puppy's GDA identification tag and his microchip tag you will also need to get a tag made for your dog with your personal information. Your telephone numbers and address are the most important information that should be on your pup's tag. All three of these ID tags should be worn on the pup's collar at all times.
- * Please supervise your pups at all times when playing with other dogs to ensure that their collars do not get tangled, loose, or caught in their teeth or mouths. And be sure to periodically check your pup's collar and tags to be sure they have not become loose or excessively worn.
- * Please enroll your puppy in a training class in your area. If you can find a Puppy Kindergarten class for you and your puppy to attend, that would be very beneficial. It's never too soon to start training and every puppy can benefit from learning commands in a group setting. Otherwise enroll your puppy in a basic training / obedience class as soon as possible. A group class is a wonderful place to practice your dog's commands around several distractions and will help to teach your dog to pay attention to you under any circumstance. GDA offers some group training classes for pups in training at the Sylmar campus. These classes are held evenings during the week for different age levels. Please contact the Puppy Department for more information.
- * Again, please do not hesitate to contact the GDA Puppy Department with any questions or concerns. We are here to help and will do our best to make your puppy-raising experience a positive one. Thanks for your hard work!

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