

# Saint Francis Service Dogs Enrichment Guide



Caylee Cuppernull  
DVM Candidate Class of '25

Drawings by Caylee Cuppernull



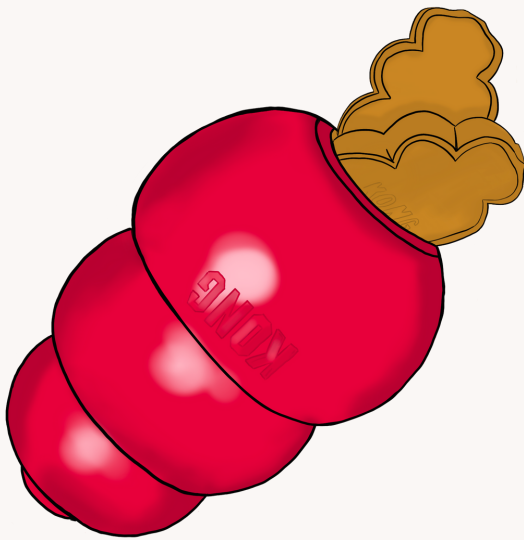


# Enrichment Activities and Calming Modalities

## LICKY MATS

Licky mats are typically flat and made of silicone with a textured surface. The concept behind a licky mat is to spread a soft and tasty substance, such as peanut butter, yogurt, or pureed treats, onto its surface. A licky mat can be a beneficial enrichment tool for dogs in isolation or recovering from surgery. It provides mental stimulation, reduces anxiety, distracts from pain, and prevents compulsive licking.

The lick mat offers versatility, as it can be attached to the kennel using carabiner clips or simply placed on the floor. It's important to keep an eye on the dog while they're using the mat, and once they've finished licking the contents, the mat should be promptly removed.

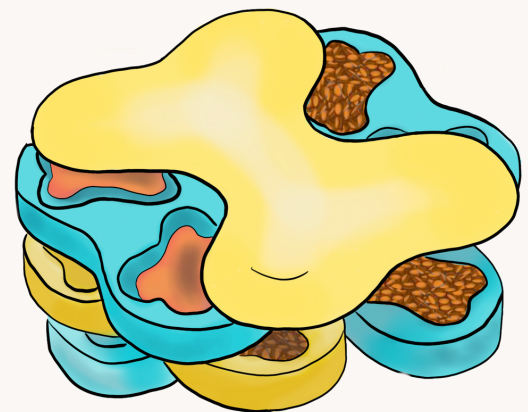


## FILLED KONG

A filled Kong dog toy is a durable rubber toy that can be stuffed with treats or food to keep dogs mentally stimulated and engaged. When a dog is in isolation or recovering from surgery, the filled Kong toy provides mental enrichment, helps reduce boredom and anxiety, and promotes slower eating to prevent overexertion during recovery. However, if a dog is overly excitable, the Kong should not be left in the kennel unsupervised.

## PUZZLE FEEDERS

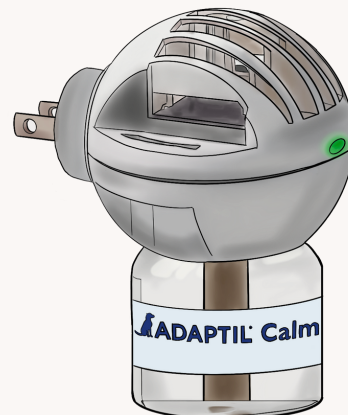
A puzzle feeder is a specialized dog toy that dispenses treats or kibble in a challenging and interactive manner, requiring the dog to solve puzzles to access the food. These feeders offer mental stimulation and enrichment, especially beneficial for dogs in isolation or recovering from surgery, as they provide a way to engage their minds and prevent boredom during periods of limited physical activity. However, it is crucial to note that puzzle feeder activities should always be conducted under direct supervision to ensure the dog's safety and prevent any potential hazards. Note: not all puzzle feeders are suitable for use within the St. Francis program as some encourage the dog to eat off of the ground.



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An Adaptil pheromone calming plug-in is a device that releases synthetic dog-appeasing pheromones, mimicking the natural comfort signals emitted by mother dogs, which helps alleviate stress and anxiety in dogs. These plug-ins are particularly beneficial for dogs in isolation or recovering from surgery as the soothing pheromones create a familiar and reassuring environment, promoting a sense of security and relaxation during recovery periods.



## AUDIO & VISUAL STIMULATION

Visual stimulation through a nature TV channel provides a calming and engaging environment for dogs in isolation, reducing stress and anxiety. Paired with classical music, the soothing auditory stimulation further enhances relaxation, promoting a peaceful atmosphere without encouraging physical excitement like jumping or lunging.

## CONTROLLED LEASH WALKING

During the recovery period, practicing deliberate and measured leash walking holds significant value. As the weeks pass, it's crucial to adhere to the recommended duration for walks. This activity not only enriches your dog's experience but also provides them with essential exercise. To ensure they receive an appropriate level of activity, it's vital to walk them for an adequate amount of time. Remember to use a short leash and prevent them from pulling to maximize the benefits. In the initial post-operative phase, a lift-me-up sling can be helpful in supporting weight-bearing.



# Saint Francis Service Dogs Rehabilitation & Enrichment Guide



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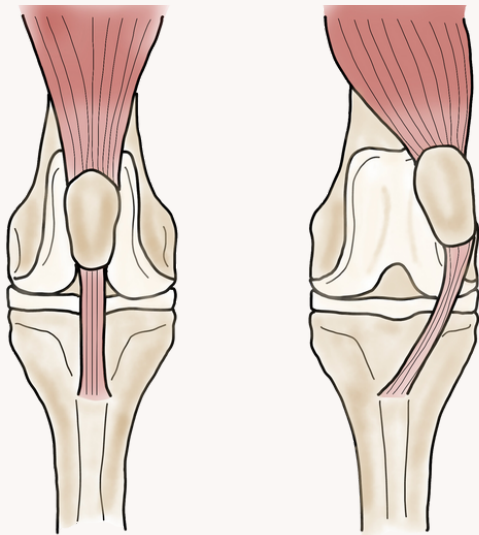
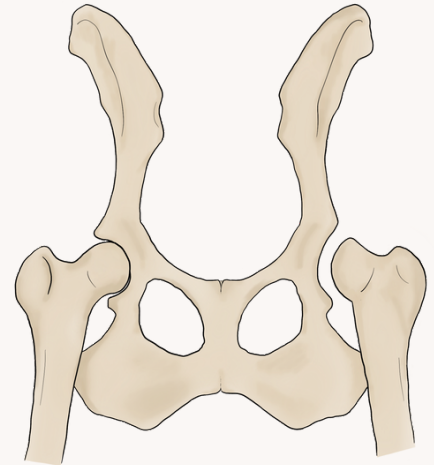
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# Common Orthopedic Injuries of the Pelvic Limb

## HIP DYSPLASIA

Canine hip dysplasia is a developmental disorder in which the hip joint is abnormally shaped. Normally, the hip joint is a ball-and-socket joint, with the socket being part of the pelvis (called the acetabulum) and the ball being the head of the femur. This joint shape allows the hip to move freely in all directions. When the hip is damaged or diseased, it can limit joint mobility and cause chronic pain and inflammation.



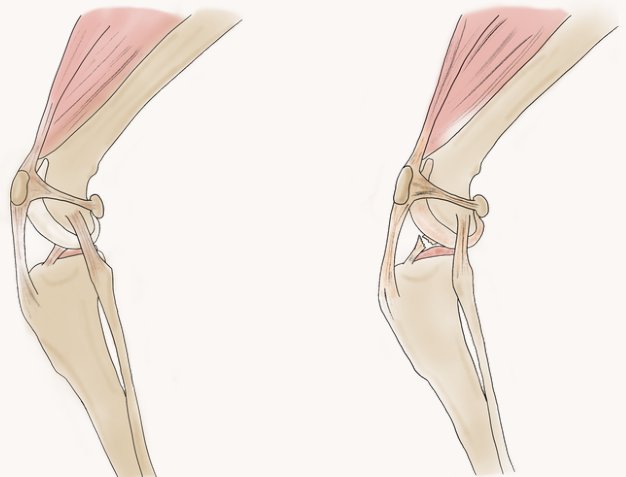
## MEDIAL PATELLAR LUXATION

Medial patella luxation (MPL) is a frequent reason for lameness in dogs. This occurs when the patella, also known as the "knee cap," moves in and out of its usual position. Normally, the knee cap stays in a groove in the femur bone and doesn't shift sideways, but sometimes it gets pulled out of that groove, causing the condition known as luxation.

## CRANIAL CRUCIATE LIGAMENT TEAR

The tearing of the cranial cruciate ligament (CCL) of the knee is a common injury that causes instability, pain, and abnormal gait.

Surgical intervention is often necessary, especially in larger or more active dogs, to stabilize the knee joint, prevent further damage, and reduce pain.

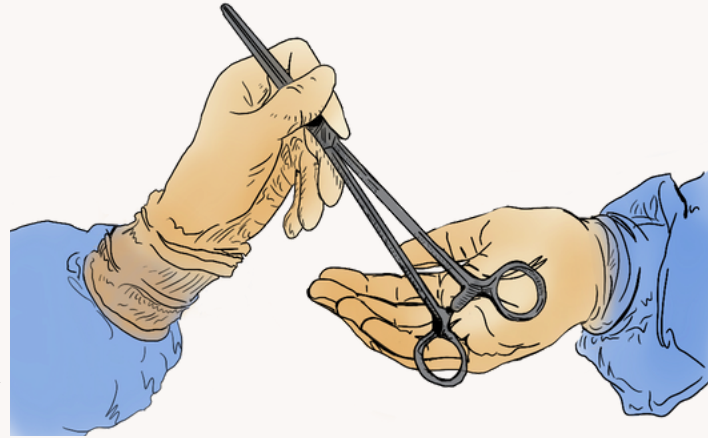




# Medical & Surgical Management

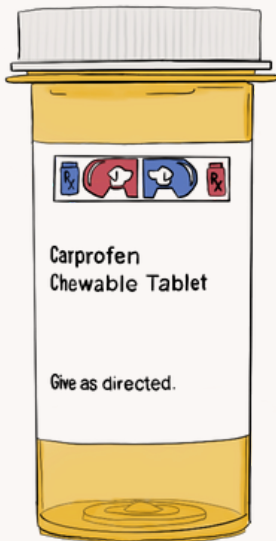
## SURGERY

Surgery is often the best option for most dogs diagnosed with an orthopedic disease of the pelvic limb because it provides the potential for a direct and precise correction of the underlying issue, leading to improved mobility and reduced pain. Unlike conservative treatments, surgery addresses the root cause of the problem, promoting faster and more reliable recovery, thereby enhancing the dog's quality of life in the long term.



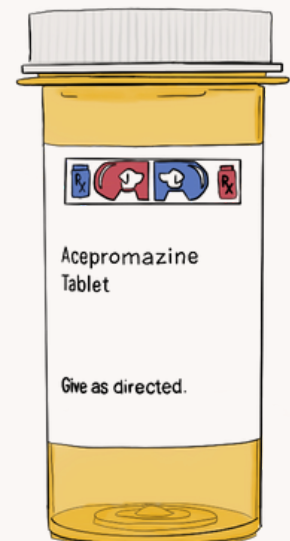
## PAIN MANAGEMENT

Appropriate post-operative pain management medication is essential for dogs' recovery as it helps alleviate discomfort, promotes faster healing, and ensures better overall well-being. By controlling pain, dogs are more likely to rest, eat, and engage in gentle movement, which reduces the risk of complications and enhances their chances of a successful and comfortable recuperation. One of the most common pain management drugs prescribed post-operatively for dogs is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory.



## SEDATIVES

Utilizing sedatives for post-surgery dogs that struggle to remain calm is crucial to ensure a smooth and successful recovery. Dogs that can't stay calm may engage in behaviors like licking the incision site or causing self-inflicted trauma, hindering the healing process and potentially leading to complications. Owners and caregivers should advocate for their dogs to receive appropriate sedation from the veterinarian to promote a safe and comfortable recovery period.

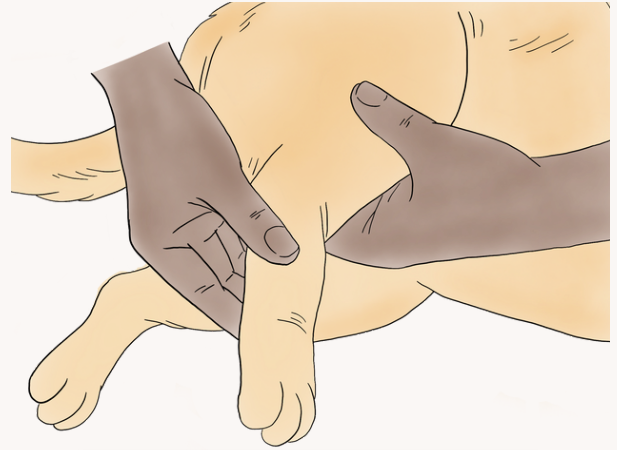




# Physical Therapy Exercise Descriptions

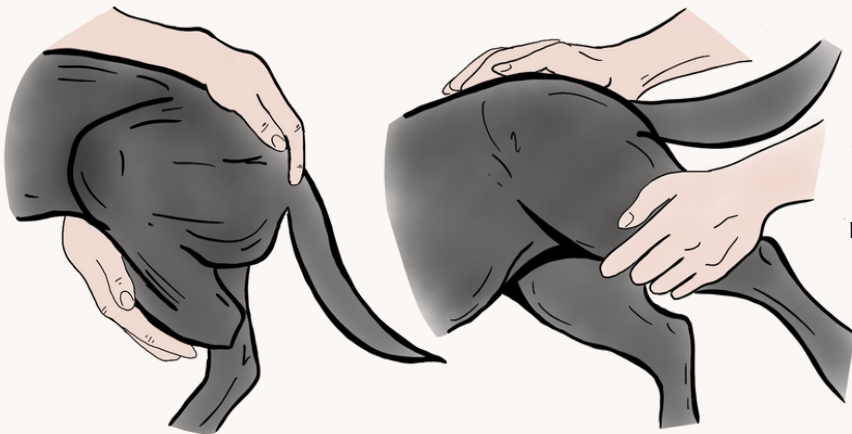
## MASSAGE

Position the dog on its side on a soft surface. Begin by gently massaging the injured limb, moving from the toes upward. If the dog shows signs of pain or discomfort, use a lighter touch.



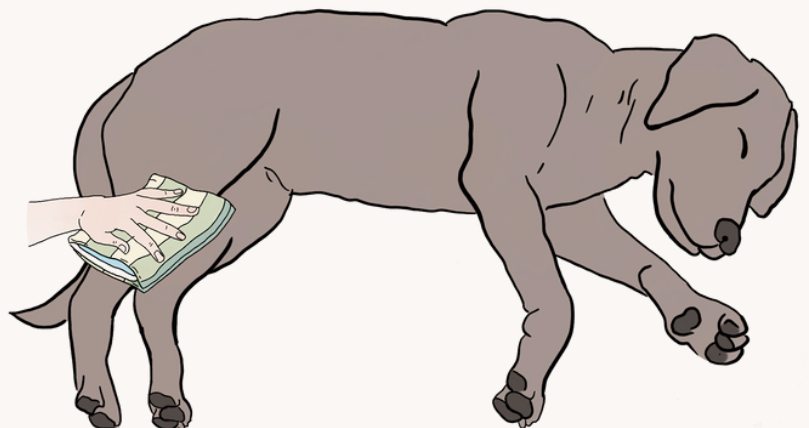
## PASSIVE RANGE OF MOTION

The main objective of PROM is to manually encourage the natural movements of each joint, which is most effectively accomplished after a massage. Begin by gently extending and flexing the ankle joint and then proceed upward to the stifle (knee) and hip. Make sure to support the limb both above and below the joint you are working on. Do NOT extend or flex the joint beyond the normal range of motion.



## ICING

Cold therapy is crucial in the first 72 hours to aid in reducing inflammation. A commercial ice pack wrapped in a towel should be placed directly along the incision for as long as the dog can tolerate but no more than ten minutes at a time. An enrichment activity can be used as a distraction during icing.



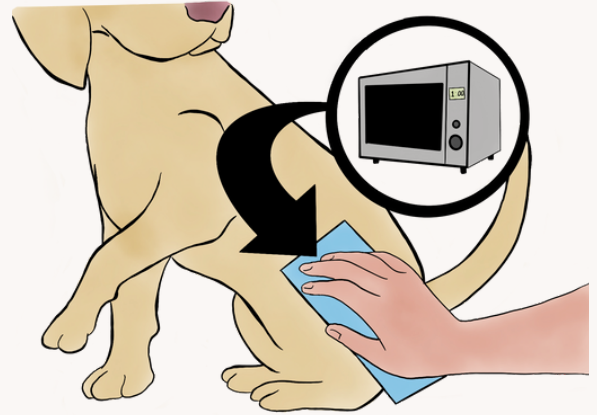




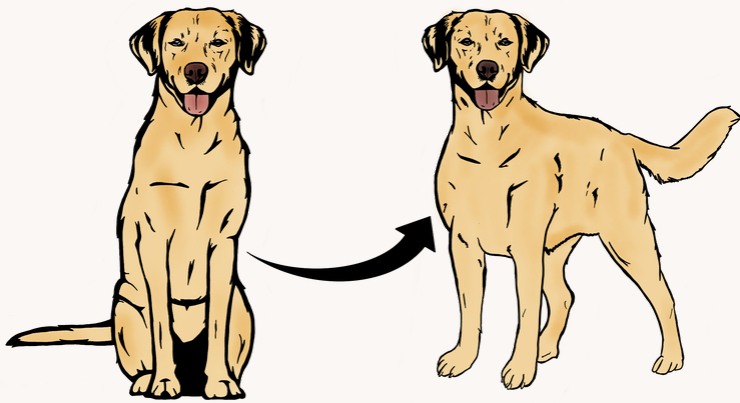
# Physical Therapy Exercise Descriptions

## MOIST HEAT

Moist heat is most beneficial when done prior to other exercises. A convenient choice for moist heat therapy is a commercial gel pack or a warm water bottle compress. Make sure the heat feels comfortably warm when touched, without risking any burns. Apply the moist heat close to the incision or areas with soft tissue swelling. It is important to wait at least 3 days after the operation before starting the moist heat treatment.



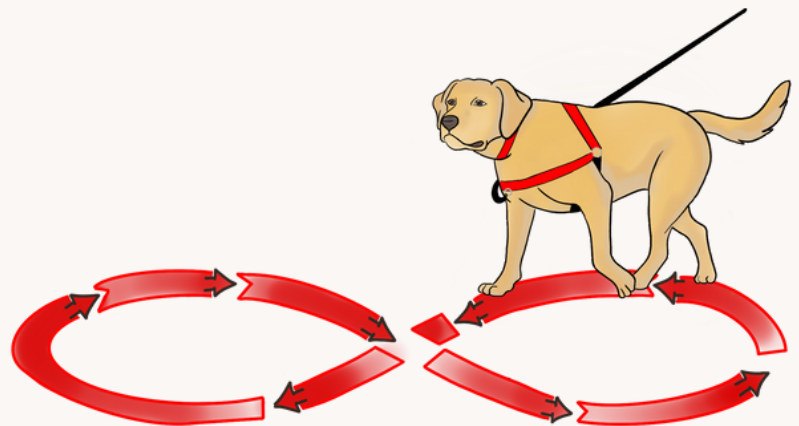
## SIT-TO-STAND EXERCISE



Maintaining the right sitting posture is crucial for executing this exercise. When instructing the dog to sit, make sure they are sitting evenly with both legs bent and positioned properly under their body. Ask the dog to sit, give them a brief 2-3 seconds, then take a step back and invite them to come towards you. Observe that the dog is pushing off from their hind legs evenly and avoiding any jumping when they stand up from the sitting position.

## FIGURE 8S

On a leash, slowly walk the dog in a Figure 8 pattern, this will help the dog distribute weight evenly on both sides and improve their balance. Begin with wide turns, and gradually make the turns tighter as you practice.

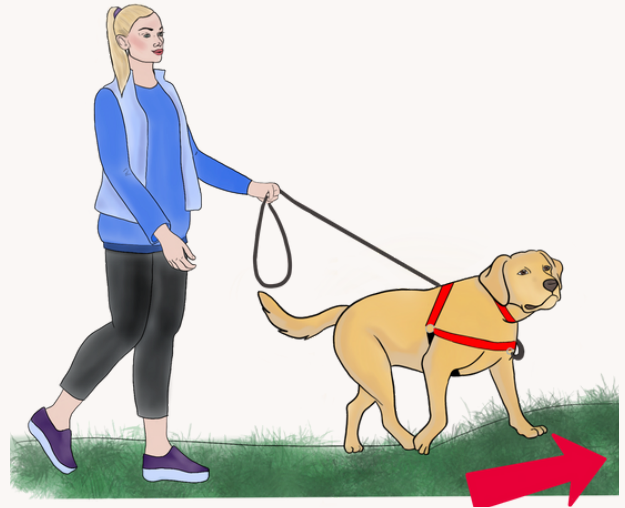




# Physical Therapy Exercise Descriptions

## HILL WORK

Look for a gently sloping hill or incline that isn't too steep. Walking on hills can be beneficial for strengthening their back legs, as most of the weight will be shifted to those limbs. Use a short leash and take your time walking up the hill, paying close attention to ensure the dog is putting weight on the affected leg. Walking slowly increases the likelihood of weight-bearing on the affected limb. Repeat the same process while walking downhill.



## CURB WORK

The curb should be appropriate for the dog's height (all curbs on St. Francis property are adequate for a dog over the age of 5 months). While on the walk, step up and off the curb for a length of 10-20 feet, making an S pattern as your walk. This exercise will improve flexion and extension. If the dog is uncomfortable, do not perform the exercise.

## STAIR WORK

Using stairs involves engaging the large muscles in a dog's back legs and helps with flexion and extension of the joints. When doing stair exercises, it's crucial to maintain complete control of the dog. Use a short leash and walk at a leisurely pace next to the dog. Always stay beside the dog while going up or down the stairs, never let them lead. It's essential to avoid introducing stair exercises too soon after an operation, as it could hinder their recovery.



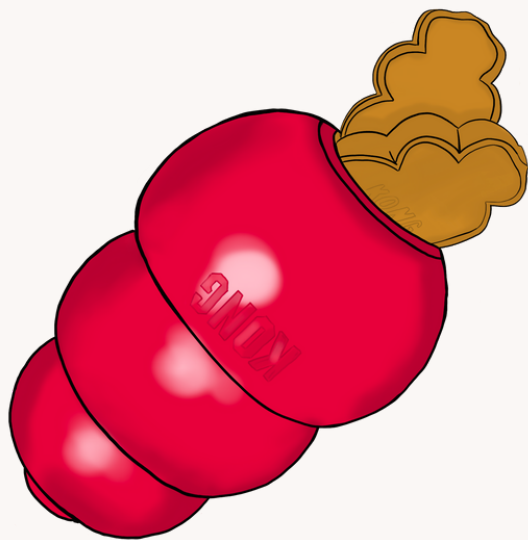


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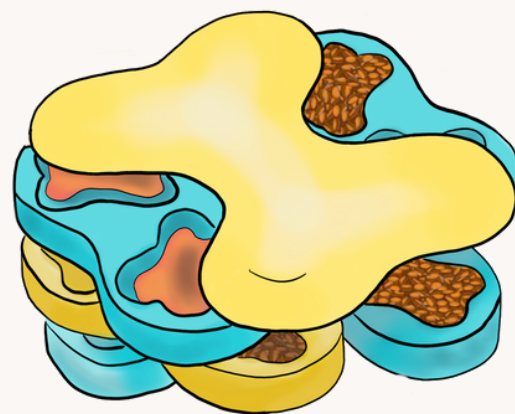


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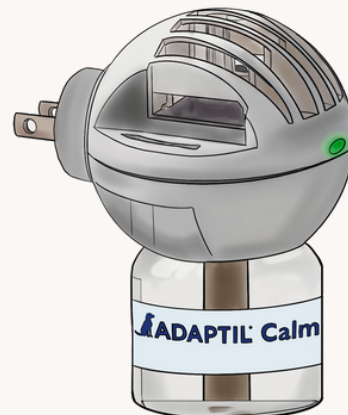
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