



FRESHMAN YEAR DREAM JOB

**HOW TO USE
YOUR FIRST YEAR OF COLLEGE
TO SET YOU UP FOR LIFE**



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Prologue

Welcome to “Freshman Year Dream Job: How Your First Year Could Set You Up for Life”!

If you’re reading this, you’re either in your freshman year of college or about to be – congratulations!

My name is Peter Shaheen and I work for Varsity Executive; we try to help college students get jobs in a variety of ways. One of our biggest beliefs, is that the path to getting your dream job after graduating college starts your first day of college.



This sounds stressful, and you might be thinking, “I just graduated from high school, now I should figure out my dream job on the first day of college? That’s not really possible”. And you’re absolutely correct. It’s not that you need to know what your dream job is on day one, or day 100 – but you should start the process of learning about professions, understanding how to get a job you want, and planning out your four years to give you the best chance of success.

It’s sort of like taking a final exam for a class: do you want to study throughout the year, or just cram at the end? Don’t cram the marathon of finding your dream job into senior year. It can be started early – and we think that’s the most effective strategy.

So, that’s the goal of this e-Book: to show you a freshman year blueprint for success, so that you can use your college years to get your dream job upon graduation. Let’s get started.

P.S. – I crammed for final exams all the time, so I should probably think of a better analogy.



Chapter 1: Congratulations

Graduating from high school is a big deal. Actually, it's more than a big deal. It's life defining.

Why is it life defining? Well, at its most basic level, graduating high school means you're entering adulthood – both in age (17 or 18) and in experience (college, career, etc.). Congratulations for reaching this milestone.

We also want to congratulate you on making a phenomenal first choice as an adult: attending college. You've made a terrific investment in yourself!



Lastly, congratulations on reading this e-Book – not only have you made the choice to invest in college, but you've also made the choice to maximize your college investment by understanding how to use the full collegiate experience.

As you continue reading, we want to make one thing clear: in our experience, these methods have been successful in securing a desirable job you want after graduating, but it's not the only way. You may take bits and pieces, or modify things slightly – and we encourage that. Everyone needs to create his/her own plan that works for them.



Chapter 2: What to Do before You Get There

For those students who haven't started college, here are some things you can do to prepare yourself for your first year. Even if you've already started as a freshman, these four areas are relevant for you.

Have Fun

Let's not forget that you're likely still in your teenage years – you should have fun and celebrate the accomplishment of making it to this step. You should fill your time before college with memorable experiences and relaxing. We don't think you need an e-Book to explain how to do that 😊



Learn Your College's Academic Landscape

In this era, colleges are proactively sending incoming freshman a ton of information in advance of their first day on campus. You'll hear about dorms, any pre-requisite work, orientation, and a ton of other topics.

When we say, "*learn about your college's academic landscape*", we mean you should (a) know the range of majors and degrees available to you and (b) understand the course and credit requirements needed to complete them. You've probably already done this work before you selected your college, but it's worth refreshing your memory.

Why does this matter now? Well, clearly your major and your degree matter a lot! Also, professionally speaking, understanding what courses, degrees, and majors are available to you will impact how you (a) manage your time and (b) how you will connect your academic experience to your potential career paths.



Understand “The Golden Five”

You don't need to spend the months before college worrying about how exactly to position yourself for professional success after college. But, you might want to simply understand what we call the “The Golden Five” – the five most important elements to getting the best job for you after you graduate college.



Life and Professional Skills

These are the skills that make you a better job candidate and professional. These includes “soft skills” like strong communication and storytelling, as well as “hard skills” such as Microsoft Excel or Microsoft Word proficiency.



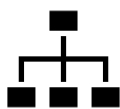
Professional Understanding

This means building your knowledge of the careers and professions available to you in the short, medium and long term.



Job Search Skills

These are things like building a resume, writing a cover letter, networking, interviewing, etc. These are all the things that you need to master to secure internships and full-time jobs.



Experience

All your experiences matter: academic, professional, extra-curricular, athletic, volunteer, etc. Using the four years of college to compile meaningful experiences is paramount to your development, as well as critical to building a resume and becoming an exciting candidate for employers.



Achievement

“Achievement” and “Experience” go hand in hand. For each experience – academic, professional, extra-curricular, athletic, volunteer – you want to achieve at the highest level possible for yourself.

We'll dive into each of these in **Chapter 4: The Golden Five**

Think about Time Management

This is not a book about time management – there are tens of thousands of fantastic Time Management books that exist today. However, we do think it's important to understand and develop a plan for how you will manage your time, especially as it relates to The Golden Five. How much time do you need to allocate to your academic achievement and experience? How much time for professional skill development?



Chapter 3: Day One

Your first day on campus! We have one piece of advice for your first day: try to breathe. It's going to be a whirlwind, but it will provide a ton of memories and excitement for you. You'll be moving around from orientation events, to classes, to social events, to much more.

So, our recommendation to you is two-fold:



Enjoy the Moment

You're only a college freshman once (we hope). Enjoy the first days and weeks of your experience! It's OK to get lost in every twist and turn as you start your journey into adulthood. You can forget about The Golden Five or getting a job.

Think About "Steady State" Time Management

Having said that, even though you can forget about The Golden Five, you should start to think about managing your time after the chaos of the first few weeks are over. How much class time do you have? How many hours a week do you need to study? How many hours a week do you want to set aside for extracurricular activities? How much time will you have to give to the Golden Five?

With that said, enjoy your first few weeks. Then, start to focus on Chapter 4: The Golden Five...



Chapter 4: The Golden Five

Each of The Golden Five contribute directly to both success in securing a job and success doing your job. We're going to spend this chapter dissecting each of the five in detail, with an emphasis on why they matter, what to focus on, and how they connect to one another.



Life and Professional Skills

As we mentioned in Chapter 2, Life and Professional Skills are skills that make you a better job candidate and employee. There are a broad range of skills that are relevant: from career-specific skills, to skills that can be used in your everyday life.

Why Does It Matter?

This is relatively straight forward: professional and life skills are obviously critical to your development and life successes. Whether it be as a student, an employee, an entrepreneur, etc. – there are always skills that you can work to develop.

What Should You Care About and Focus on?

This is a bit more complicated. Let's talk about two categories of skills: life skills and professional skills.

Broadly speaking, “life” skills are those that apply to several aspects of your experience: in a romantic relationship, at your job, with your family, etc. An example of this could be communication skills (how clearly and effectively can you convey your thoughts in an articulate and impactful manner). This is considered a life skill: one that has an effect on multiple aspects of your life, including personal and professional.

A professional skill is something more narrow: a skill used specifically for a profession. This could be something like having an advanced proficiency with Microsoft Excel. For some careers, this is a vital skill that you will use nearly every day on the job.

So, how do you know what to focus on? There are a few life skills that are almost universally used – communication, following through, critical thinking, etc. However, beyond those universally positive skills, knowing what to focus on will largely be dependent on the careers or jobs you are most interested in pursuing.



For example, if you know that corporate financial analyst is a job you are interested in, you should research and understand the job-specific skills required. This can be something as simple as searching “what do corporate financial analysts do?”, or finding a particular job posting and reading the skills required or preferred. Another step would be to see if you can find an alumnus of your school that has a corporate financial analyst job, and simply contact them for more information.

How Does It Relate to the Other Elements of The Golden Five?

Professional Understanding: as you increase your professional understanding and awareness of what’s available to you, you will be better able to prioritize which life and professional skills you want to spend the most time developing.

Job Search Skills: life and professional skill development will propel your job search skills. For example, honing communication and storytelling skills will make you a better interviewer.

Experience: you’ll be honing life and professional skills throughout each of your experiences. You’ll also be able to get better and more advanced experiences as you build relevant skills. For example, you’ll hone Microsoft Excel skills as a corporate financial analyst intern. That experience building that skill will make you a more attractive candidate for a full-time job after graduation.

Achievement: Life and Professional skills will improve your chances of achieving. For example, good communication skills can help you achieve a better grade in particular classes.

Professional Understanding



Professional Understanding is an awareness of the careers and jobs available to you upon graduation and beyond. We believe the biggest challenge with the college experience is not fully understanding the wide range of careers that you can have as a college graduate.

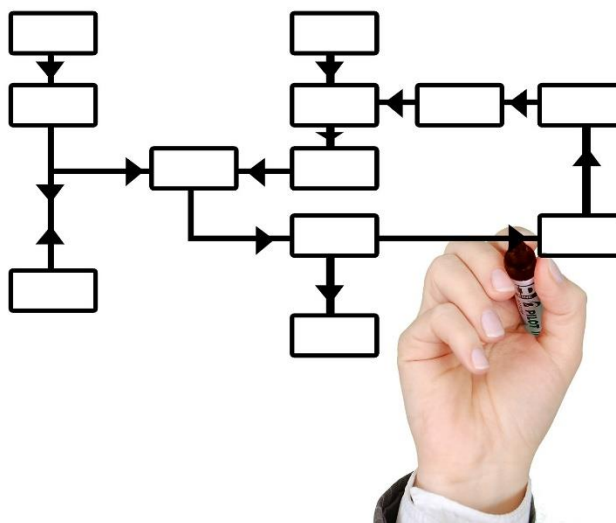
Why Does It Matter?

Professional understanding is critical. Many times, students will graduate college with a very narrow view of their career options. This can lead to any number of bad outcomes, most notably, being stuck in a job you don’t like or feeling like you should be in a different career. Educating yourself and increasing your professional understanding and awareness is key.

What Should You Care About and Focus on?



The world of jobs is vast and it's almost impossible to know and understand every potential career. LinkedIn recognizes over 100 industries. Harvard Business School lists about 50. The bottom line is that there are a lot of career options, and you should use your college years to figure out the short list of ones you're interested in pursuing.



So, you can start with your own research: take one or two industries per week and just do some simple web searches. For example, you could do 15 minutes a few days a week researching investment banking. You can find interviews with people who've done the job, career guides from various sites, and open positions from a wide array of companies. Also, you can leverage your career center to see what resources they have to offer for a specific industry.

A good place to start is VarsityExecutive.com, LinkedIn.com, or any other career site that has a list of every industry and every function in one place. There, you can browse different careers and start to make lists of the ones you are interested in pursuing, and the ones you know you aren't.

When researching an industry or a function, it's important to think about the following things: what skills are used and developed, what is the career progression within a function or industry, and what are the steps you can take to secure employment. Finding all this information will take some time, so start with basic research and understanding first.

How Does It Relate to the Other Elements of The Golden Five?

Life and Professional Skills: Professional understanding will be the basis for what life and professional skills you choose to focus your efforts on developing. For example, if you know that you want to be an investment banker, and all investment bankers need to use Microsoft Excel for their careers (based on your research), then you should work on developing proficiency in Microsoft Excel.

Job Search Skills: as you start to develop your list of careers you are interested in pursuing; job search skills will enable you to increase your chances of landing a job within an industry or function you want.

Experience: again, as you start to get your short list of career options, you'll want to hunt down experiences that align with the careers and jobs you want. The most basic example is getting an internship as an investment banker if you want to be an investment banker after graduation. But, sometimes, that's not so easy. So, you could focus on getting an experience that builds a skill that



you need in order to do a job that's on your short list (you'll know what type of skills you'll need through the research process).

Achievement: as you achieve higher and better results, more jobs and industries will open up to you. Sometimes, the most competitive jobs will ask for your GPA, or a high-profile marketing job will want to see you in a leadership position at your school's marketing club.



Job Search Skills

Job search skills are the fundamental skills required to find and secure a full-time job after you graduate. You've probably heard of some of them already. They're things like interviewing, writing a resume or cover letter, networking, etc.

Why Does It Matter?

It's obvious why some job search skills matter: almost every job requires an interview and a resume. But, some other basic skills are important too. For example, it's widely believed that "networking" is a vital skill for those seeking a job. John Bennett (director of the Master of Science and executive coaching and assistant professor of behavioral science at the McColl School of Business at Queens University of Charlotte), says "Research tells us that between 60-80% of jobs are found through personal relationships." That's why networking matters. Let's walk through a few of the critical ones.

What Should You Care About and Focus on?

We think the four most important skills are resume & cover letter writing, interviewing, networking, and application efficiency.

Resumes and cover letters are required for most jobs (a resume, almost certainly). Ideally, your career center will have a number of resources available that will help you understand the basics and advanced aspects of writing cover letters and resumes.

Interviewing is also a near certainty before securing any job. There can be multiple interviews for a job, group interviews, in-person interviews, phone interviews, etc. Understanding the interview process, how to tell your story, and what to share with a potential employer is critical.

Networking is vital for getting jobs (especially the competitive ones). Networking can be summed up as building personal relationships with your contacts, with the potential of mutually beneficial professional interests. To start, you should focus on LinkedIn (the main form of online professional networking) and in-person networking at career fairs, alumni events, etc.

Application efficiency is how quickly, accurately, and thoroughly you apply to open jobs / positions. You may have to apply to dozens of jobs, and doing so with a high-level attention to detail is very important (to keep track of each process, to understand what's required for each application, etc.)

How Does It Relate to the Other Elements of The Golden Five?



Life and Professional Skills: life and professional skills are fundamentally related. Every life or professional skill can (and, most of the time, should) come through your job search skills. As a simple example, if you're proficient in Microsoft Excel, that should show up on your resume. As another example, you will use the storytelling life skill in the interview process.

Professional Understanding: as you start to understand the industries, careers, and jobs that you're most interested in, your job search skills will start to evolve. As an example, if you want a job in consulting, you'll soon realize that you'll do what's called a "case study" during the interview process.

Experience: most experiences will require you to use one or more job search skills. For example, an internship usually requires a resume, an interview, and (sometimes) a cover letter. In addition, experiences will also contribute to your job search skills. They will be on your resume and you'll talk about them during interviews and networking events.

Achievement: Similar to "experience", achievement will be articulated in your job search skills. Your resume, cover letter, and interview stories will articulate what you achieved academically, professionally, philanthropically, etc..

Experience: Internships, Clubs, Major/Minor/Coursework, Volunteering, etc.

Experience can simply be defined as "anything that can go on your resume". It's the internships, the classes, the volunteering, the part-time jobs, the extracurricular activities, and more. These are all the things that build and develop your skills before you graduate and seek full-time employment.

Why Does It Matter?

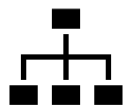
If your experience is everything that can be summarized on your resume, it's pretty clear why it matters: to be viewed as the best possible candidate for employers. It also matters because each experience will (a) give you an opportunity to hone and develop your skills and (b) increase your professional awareness and understanding of a particular career or job.

What Should You Care About and Focus on?

Broadly speaking, there are traditional experiences and non-traditional experiences. Traditional experiences include things like internships, part-time work, clubs / teams / associations, and volunteering. Non-traditional experiences are things such as shadowing, personal research project, or academic internships / fellowships.

Generally, you should focus on the experiences that best align with your passions and interests based on the research you do with regards to professional understanding. As a simple example, if you know you're interested in a full-time job in marketing after graduation, you should look for (traditional or non-traditional) marketing experiences.

Now, let's answer "which type of experience should I look for?". Unfortunately, the answer is ambiguous: it depends. As a freshman in college, you may be somewhat limited – there aren't





many internships designed for someone's summer after freshman year. With that, you have a few traditional and a few non-traditional experiences to choose from. To make that choice, understand and research the requirements, availability, and career relevance of each potential experience. For example, if you only have two free weeks during your summer after freshman year, you should probably be looking at shadowing, part-time, or volunteering experiences.

How Does It Relate to the Other Elements of The Golden Five?

Life and Professional Skills: Life and professional skills will help you (a) get the opportunities to do the experiences discussed above and (b) allow you to continue to develop and hone skills during the experiences themselves.

Professional Understanding: based on your research and understanding of the professions available to you, you will be able to pursue and select the experiences that best align with the list of careers that are intriguing to you.

Job Search Skills: job search skills will (a) help you secure experiences and (b) be bolstered by each experience (you will add the experience to your resume, and discuss in your interviews / networking).

Achievement: You want to achieve in every experience that you have. If you volunteer, the organization or volunteer manager should have glowing reviews of your time there. In your classes / coursework, you should do your best to get the best possible grades.



Achievement

GPA, Club Position/Cabinet, Success at Work, Recommendations

Achievement can simply be described with one of the oldest credos: do your best. In your coursework, internships, shadowing experiences, volunteer work, extracurriculars – do the best job you possibly can.

Why Does It Matter?

You don't need this e-Book to realize that achievement matters. Employers are looking for high achievers across all categories to join their teams. Sometimes, employers will be as direct as asking for your GPA while applying. Other times, a potential full-time employer will call the organization you volunteered / interned for as a reference.

What Should You Care About and Focus on?

Again, no need to over-explain this, but, focus on the areas that you can control. As a basketball player, you can't force yourself to get taller, but you can work on your shooting. Comparably, you can't control if you don't have a natural ability in mathematics, but you can do your best to study the material diligently, participate in class, and get academic help when necessary.

How Does It Relate to the Other Elements of The Golden Five?

Life and Professional Skills: life and professional skills will help you achieve academically, professionally, and otherwise.



Professional Understanding: after doing research, each career / job you seek will have its own unique list of experiences and achievements. For example, some jobs will have a minimum GPA required to be able to apply. Some jobs will only select candidates from a certain major, concentration, or focus area.

Job Search Skills: your job search skills will articulate your achievement. Literally, some employers will ask you, "what is your greatest achievement?" in an interview. Also, your achievements will be

Experience: as we said earlier, your goal should be to achieve as much as possible throughout all your wide-ranging experiences.



Chapter 5: Setting a Freshman Year Plan – A Sample Action Plan

For each of the Golden 5, you should have a goal and a plan for your freshman year. A goal is the “end state” – what skills will you improve by the end of freshman year? A plan is how you are going to your goal – how can you improve your communication skills? Let’s walk through some examples of goals and plans for your freshman year.



Life and Professional Skills

Sample Goal

Increase proficiency in your three most important skills: presentation in front of an audience, Microsoft Excel, and storytelling.

Sample Plan

Dedicate one hour per week honing, practicing, and developing each skill.

Why This Plan / Goal?

As a freshman, you’ll probably have a chaotic schedule: new classes, friends, challenges, etc. That said, carving out three hours per week to work on a critical life or professional skill can serve you very well. In addition, you can make more granular goals / plans for specific skills (i.e., attaining a specific certification in Microsoft Excel through an 8-hour online course).

Making it Your Own

As mentioned in Chapter 4, there are several factors that will determine on which skills you should dedicate your focus and time. In addition, different skills have their own unique elements that will dictate how to improve them. For example, the path to becoming proficiency at Microsoft Excel is much different than the path to becoming an expert in presenting to an audience.



Professional Understanding

Sample Goal

Understand the skills, interview process, experience requirements, etc. for 30 careers.

Sample Plan

Pick a new career / industry / job each week, and do 20 minutes of research on them every day.



Why This Plan / Goal?

Well, the math is easy: you'll be spending 2+ hours a week getting to know 30 industries in 30 weeks. Also, twenty minutes a day should be fairly easy to accomplish. Whether it's listening to a podcast on product marketing while you walk to class, or reading an article on a mechanical engineering at lunch, you can probably carve out 20 minutes of your day. Lastly, 30 is a lot – that, coupled with other learnings / experiences you've made or will make, will give you a great start with professional understanding by the end of your freshman year.



Making it Your Own

As we mentioned, 30 is a lot of careers to research in a year, but it's not even close to being an exhaustive list. One way to make this plan your own is to carefully select the 30 careers based on what you believe to be most interesting / appealing to you. The list may change in a year, but that's OK – you can research another 30 when you're a sophomore. Lastly, you might want to have a more granular goal with respect to each of the 30 careers. For example, you could explicitly state, "for each career, I will know (a) approximate starting salary (b) degree / experience requirements (c) interview process (d) etc.". By doing this, you can orient your research to be more effective with your daily 20 minutes.

Job Search Skills

Sample Goal

Understand and practice each of the four fundamental job search skills: resume & cover letter writing, networking, interviewing, and application efficiency.

Sample Plan

During freshman year (a) research each skill for one hour per month, (b) write your resume and at least one cover letter, (c) attend at least one networking event, (d) apply to at least one experience (volunteer, internship, part-time, etc.) and (e) take one interview (real or mock)

Why This Plan / Goal?

First of all, researching each of these skills will be the foundation for doing them effectively. For example, this could include going to your Career Center's resume workshop or office hours. Practicing each of these skills will take more effort. Writing a resume could take several weeks, and there might not be many networking events available to freshman. However, over the course of your freshman year, you should have ample time and opportunity to both research and develop these skills, as well as putting them in action.

Making it Your Own

The key to job search skills is the research and preparation of each of them. If you don't know how to write a resume, and try to write it from scratch, it will be difficult to create one that's worth





your time. So, you have to reach into your toolkit and use what's available to you. That could mean the Career Center, online resources, mentors, parents, etc. From a time commitment perspective, the practice of each might not take that long. For example, there are some jobs you can apply for in under 15 minutes.

Experience

Sample Goal

Between your freshman year and the subsequent summer, secure three experiences that you can add to your resume.

Sample Plan

Apply for 12 experiences of varying types: volunteering, clubs, part-time jobs, internships, shadowing, etc. Secure and accept three of them.

Why This Plan / Goal?

First and foremost: this is easier said than done. Joining the marketing club or volunteering a few hours is relatively simple, but getting an internship is very difficult as a freshman. That said, if you can find a solid mix of simple and difficult experiences, 12 opportunities should generate 3 experiences that you can later add to your resume. Why three experiences? Obviously, this can vary depending on what types of experiences you want and your schedule; however, we think that three additions to your resume is both reasonable and a fantastic place to be as a rising sophomore.

Making it Your Own

Customizing this goal and plan is straightforward: it's up to you to identify 12 opportunities that you are both interested in and believe you are a solid candidate for consideration. Additionally, you want to identify those experiences that are most closely associated with the careers and jobs you're interested in based on your professional understanding research. So, as an example, let's say that your professional research has shown you that marketing is a potential career for you. A simple experience you can attain is to simply join your school's marketing club. Secondly, you could find and apply for 5 or 6 part-time / intern marketing jobs. You could also tap into your alumni database to find 3 or 4 marketing professionals to email to ask for a summer shadowing experience.

Achievement

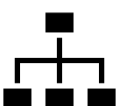
Sample Goal

Set an achievement goal for every course, experience, networking event, etc.

Sample Plan

The plan will be highly dependent on what you're hoping to achieve in: a course will have a studying and participation plan, a networking event will have a shorter plan, etc.

Why This Plan / Goal?





As a general practice, setting an achievement goal and plan any endeavor is a fantastic habit. This ensures that you'll have meaningful content for your resumes, interviews, and other aspects to securing your dream job.

Making it Your Own

Obviously, each endeavor will have their own unique set of elements and nuances that will contribute to a detailed goal and associated plan.



Chapter 6: Executing, Adapting, and Life After Freshman Year

Once you've set your goals for each of the Golden 5, there are three things left to do: execute, adapt, and think about your life after freshman year.

Executing

Making your plan will take time, effort, and critical thinking; however, equally as important is executing against that plan. If you like to have a very structured day, you can block off the same one or two hours to dedicate to your overall plan. You can also pick specific weeks to focus on it (perhaps when your coursework is not as time consuming).



Adapting

Adapting is arguably the most important thing to do after making your plan. Things are always changing, and being able to change your goals and plans will be critical to having an effective and successful freshman year.

For example, you may make a plan that's oriented towards a career in marketing. You will be looking for similar experiences, developing skills that are important for marketers, etc. However, after doing some research on the careers within marketing and what you would be doing, you could lose interest. That happens all the time! It's not a big deal, but you have to be able to evolve your goals and plans after realizing it. You can re-prioritize them to be oriented towards a career that still has your interest.

Life After Freshman Year

If you've properly adapted and executed on your plans, your sophomore through senior year will be much easier for you: however, that doesn't mean your work is done. Every year, you'll have to dedicate time and energy to each of the Golden 5. When you're a sophomore and junior, that might mean spending more time on getting experiences for your resume (i.e., a formal internship). When you're a senior, you'll probably be focusing your efforts more on the job search skills (i.e., resume, interviewing, etc. for your full-time job after graduation).



Concluding Thoughts

Thank you for reading Freshman Year Dream Job! We hope that you learned something useful that will help you secure a job you are truly excited and passionate about after you graduate. For more information, online courses, tips, articles, etc., visit VarsityExecutive.com

About the Author

Varsity Executive is an online program for students looking to get better jobs. We focus on life and professional skill building, job search skill building, and professional awareness. We help students through free and premium tools, articles, e-Learning/ courses, and other content. Visit www.varsityexecutive.com for additional information.

Peter Shaheen has been serving as the president of Varsity Executive since March, 2013. He's worked in finance, marketing, sales, operations and management at companies ranging from 10 employees to 100,000 employees.

