Applicant tracking systems:

the ultimate buyer's guide



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In the battle to secure talent, many businesses find an applicant tracking system (ATS) central to their success.

Why?

A good ATS lets you control and manage every aspect of the recruitment journey. It also helps drive greater efficiencies, reduce costs and improve the quality of your processes for both you and your new hires.

From authorising recruitment requests to posting jobs, managing applications and delivering a premium candidate experience, applicant tracking systems play a vital role in securing top talent.



The key benefits of Applicant Tracking Systems

Time savings - Key functionality such as templates, multi job board posting and intelligent shortlisting tools can save hours of admin when it comes to creating and publishing vacancies as well as sifting through applications.

Process efficiency - Using the power of automation and AI, admin-heavy processes can be simplified and streamlined at each stage of the recruitment journey to enhance both the employer and candidate experience.

Increased control - You can introduce user access rights, audit trails, defined workflows and milestones to ensure that every vacancy is authorised, on-brand and managed by the right people in line with your policies and procedures.

Reduced costs - If you implement the right system, you'll be able to streamline processes and use real-time reporting to make data-driven decisions. A good ATS will ensure you deliver the best possible experience while reducing reliance on agencies, maximising direct sourcing strategies and reducing drop-offs.





Choosing the right ATS is an important decision

ATS platforms are all built differently. From basic, out-of-the-box packages to more complex modular solutions that can grow with your business, it's important to outline your needs and objectives in order to choose the right level of technology for you.

Making the wrong choice not only puts a hole in your finances but can seriously impact the efficiency of your recruitment processes too; making the right decision sees you reap all the rewards you hoped for and potentially enjoy some unexpected, extra positives.

The best thing to do is get a sense of what's out there and then compare that with what you need.

That's what this guide is all about.

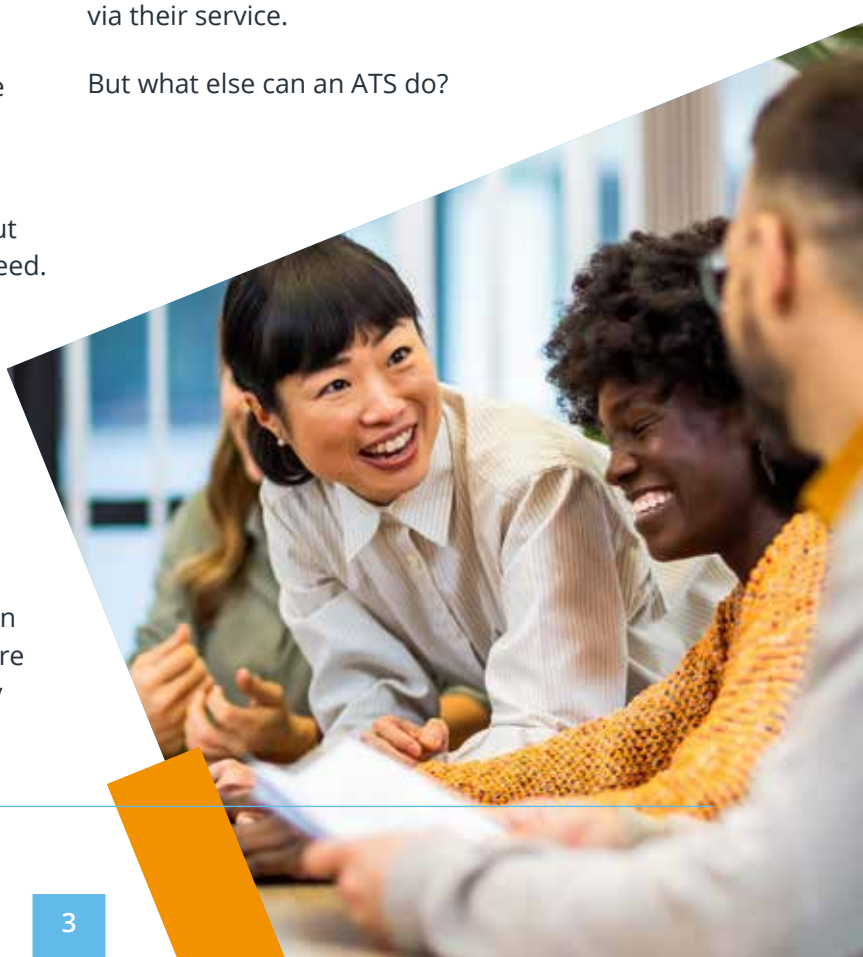
What is an ATS?

ATS software is used by internal recruitment teams to manage hiring activity across their organisations. It acts as a centralised hub when securing new staff, regardless of whether you're posting vacancies yourself or using third-party services to help you.

The whole point of an ATS is to help you control and manage each stage of the recruitment process without having to log into multiple platforms or constantly chase for updates. You'll be able to see everything in one place and automate core tasks that once felt like time-sapping chores.

The functionality of an ATS varies depending on the vendor. For example, job boards generally offer the most simplistic variety; they simply allow you to view and shortlist applications you receive via their service.

But what else can an ATS do?



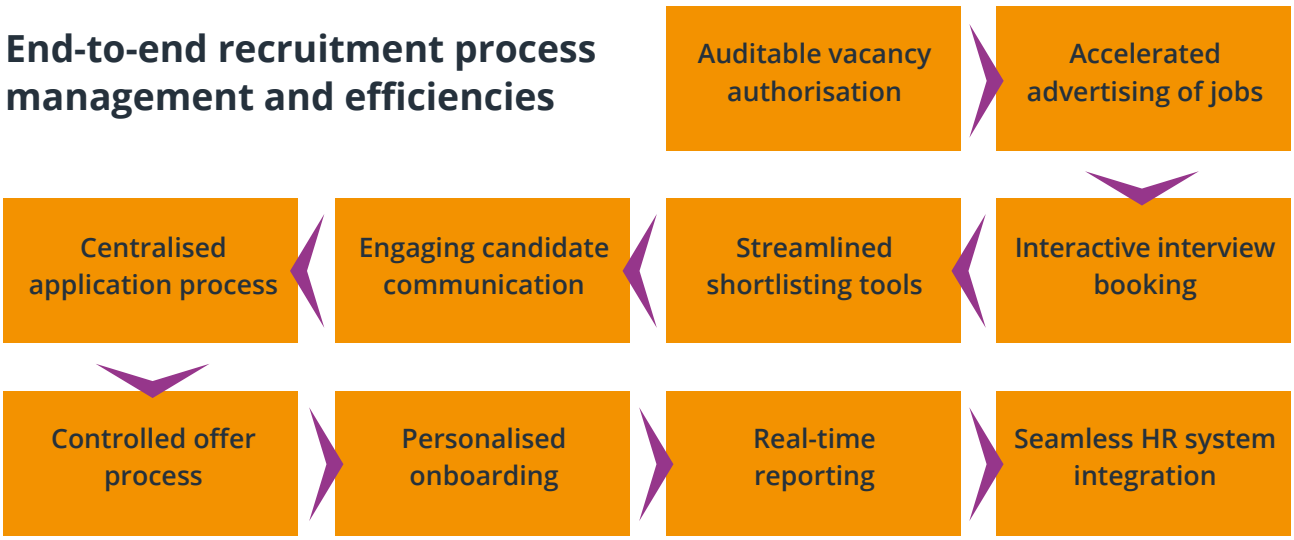
Next-level ATS recruitment software

Outside this expected core function of an ATS, there is a wealth of functionality to explore, with key providers competing to support the much wider requirements of the entire recruitment journey and beyond.

For instance, some ATSs will help you build a job advert and reach out via several recruitment sites - and social media platforms - to tempt would-be candidates. There might also be functionality to help after those applications come rushing in, with solutions for your interview process and even onboarding your successful candidate.

It's not always a case of 'one size fits all'. Some seek to provide a more comprehensive end-to-end solution that offers a wealth of core or optional features that you can add as your business grows.

End-to-end recruitment process management and efficiencies





If your vendor gives you this much choice, you ideally want two more things: the chance to pick what you need and a team to help with implementation.

Checking your ATS against the gold standard

A vendor can offer all the functionality in the world, but how do you know it has been built to a high enough standard?

There are some hallmarks of quality you can spot. Does the vendor's approach to an ATS:

- Save you time?
- Make things more efficient?
- Give you more control?
- Improve the quality of your recruitment processes?
- Cut costs to your business?

Why would an organisation want to implement an ATS?

It centralises all your recruitment activity on one platform

If you don't use ATS recruitment software to help you hire staff, you have to juggle many different apps to get the job done.

You'll need spreadsheets to track applicants, email to communicate with them, document creation software for job descriptions and letters, scheduling tools so the emails don't get out of control, project management tools so you don't lose track of your progress (and your spreadsheets and documents), recording software, and feedback tools.

Meanwhile, all this doesn't just need organising; it needs watertight security.

It gives HR and line managers 24/7 access to all the information they need

In this day and age, the last thing you want is to be chained to your desk. You will want data to hand wherever you are, regardless of the time. Maybe you want to work flexibly; perhaps you want to check some details at home - away from the noise of the office. Regardless, you want to be able to access it from the cloud via any internet-enabled device.

It defines clear processes and milestones for consistency

Consistency is your secret weapon in recruitment, but it can feel nearly impossible if you're juggling an assortment of apps.

With a rock-solid ATS system in place, you can hold all candidates to the same standards, get answers to the same questions, and ensure you carry out the proper background checks.

This uniform approach ensures you've found the best of the bunch and that your process didn't mistakenly discriminate against anyone.

It improves the candidate experience with a mobile-friendly, branded, slick process

Candidates need the whole job-seeking experience to be comfortable. If it's not, they are less likely to stick around.

Poor organisation is a red flag to someone looking to uproot their life to work with you. It's a warning sign to go with someone else or stay where they currently work.

Even if they try to give your business the benefit of the doubt, a slicker organisation can snap them up mid-process.

But an ATS can give you great correspondence, testing, interview and onboarding tools, which means candidates will have confidence in you, and you'll have a faster time-to-hire, making it less likely someone can poach them.



You gain access to instant reporting to analyse performance and monitor KPIs

Automation is half the battle when it comes to efficient recruiting. The other half is actionable intelligence.

An ATS should provide you with reporting tools help you keep up with the competition and your targets, giving you the data you need to understand your recruitment market and make better decisions faster.

It ensures your data is stored and processed in line with Data Protection and GDPR compliance

When someone applies for a job at your business, they place you in a position of trust by sharing identifiable information.

And when you are trying to recruit without an ATS, that's an unenviable challenge.

You're spending too much time jumping from one software package to another throughout the process, so how do you know everything is appropriately secured and data is only being held for the right amount of time?

A good ATS is an easy way to handle all this while demonstrating compliance if asked.



Applicant tracking systems, automation and AI

At IRIS, we like AI.

But AI can only take you so far. The truth is, nobody knows exactly what's going on inside an AI once it's built; the way each output is generated remains a mystery.

This is fine if you want to generate the first draft of a letter. But when you want to ensure that you haven't discriminated against someone or made an error in a recruitment process, you need something more predictable.

Automation is your ally

In recruitment, automation is your friend when it comes to sensitive decision-making.

It helps you speed things up, but it's also clear how and why the ATS has done what it's done, unlike AI.

Automation doesn't try to substitute your decision-making. However, it does cut out the drudgery, make you more efficient, and leave the decisions to you. In essence, automation gives you the time and space to think.

How to choose the right features and functionality for you

It's time for a deeper dive when it comes to ATS functionality.

At IRIS Recrtuitment, we provide a lot of features with our ATS, so we can give you a tour of what a comprehensive platform looks like, using what we created as an example.

Just remember that more functions should mean more choices for you. That's why we made our solution modular, so you can pick what functions you need and leave the rest.

We firmly believe that an ATS should be able to grow with your business.

Key ATS functionality as delivered IRIS Recruitment:

- **Online job requisition/vacancy authorisation process** - Sign-off is everything when you have to agree on a vacancy, tenure, salary and perks: get it wrong, and it's back to square one. Our tools ensure you get properly recorded approval BEFORE any vacancy is published.
- **Feature-rich careers page and job adverts** - The competition is strong, and you need to look stronger. That means it's time to showcase your organisation and the opportunities you have by using branding, video, photo carousels and icons. We give you complete control over how and when your vacancies are published.
- **Direct access to job boards** - If you already have a relationship with job boards and aggregators, you can post directly using these organisations and the credits or agreements you have with them. This includes multi-posting tools and 'ATSi' integration with key job sites to deliver a seamless journey from vacancy draft to receiving applications.
- **Recruitment agency manager** - Accepting CVs from outside your Preferred Supplier List (PSL) can cost you a lot of money. Our recruitment agency manager prevents that, providing tools to brief your PSL, a portal to exchange information with consultants and a system to review agencies' performance and negotiate fees.
- **Application form builder** - Unlimited application forms can be created with multiple question formats. This lets you gather role-specific information to make more informed selection decisions.
- **Application process builder** - This helps you support the needs of different roles by using:
- **'Quick apply'** - A single page of key questions that candidates can answer quickly.
- **'Standard'** - A versatile application form that can be customised to include multiple pages, declarations, and guidance notes where needed.
- **Two-stage applications** - Capture what you need to make your initial shortlist and then ask those who 'qualify' to complete some additional information to help further selection decisions.
- **Filtering and scoring tools** - Our ATS can help you sort and filter candidates based on specific criteria, such as weighted questions and whether they meet critical requirements like holding a valid driver's license. It can also set up alerts to manage applications from individuals with criminal convictions or to support people as part of disability-confident initiatives.
- **Anonymised candidate scoring tools** - This helps you promote a non-discriminatory selection process by anonymising applications and having more than one evaluator score according to pre-defined criteria.
- **Self-selection interview tools** - Your shortlisted candidates can book an interview based on your interviewer's availability.
- **Real-time interview technology** - You can use Microsoft Teams or Google to schedule and hold live interviews with candidates.



- **Recorded interviews** - Ensures a fair and consistent approach for all candidates by setting a defined number of questions and time frames for answering. This allows your candidates to complete the questions at a time and place suitable for them. The recorded responses are stored on the candidate's account and can be viewed within your software as often as needed.
- **Internal recruitment** - You can create and publish internal-only job postings along with specific application forms and processes, including forms for line manager endorsement.
- **Candidate communication** - Our ATS helps you create endless templates that will assist with every step of the recruitment process. Furthermore, many of these templates can be fully customised with your brand logo and colours. You can also use SMS text messages to promptly alert candidates about any emails or tasks that require their attention, which will help expedite the process.
- **CV parsing** - If your organisation allows CV submissions, the information in the candidate's CV can be used to automatically fill in relevant sections of the application form.
- **CV redaction** - This tool automatically removes identifying information from a CV, such as name, address, and school.
- **Offer process workflow** - Because of their compliance pitfalls, offers are an especially sensitive part of your recruitment journey. This tool has been designed to help you ensure all necessary steps are taken, and all relevant information is collected consistently. It is tailored to support your processes and milestones so that all tasks are completed in the correct order.
- **References module** - Your shortlisted candidates can submit the details of their referees, and the software will do the rest. It can automatically email each person to obtain references and send prompts should these not be completed within a specific timeframe.
- **Online testing integration** - If you use third-party online testing providers to assist you in making informed decisions, this seamless integration enables you to manage your existing partnerships and invite candidates to complete tests as part of your process. The results will be stored in your candidate's account.
- **RTW checks** - Our exclusive integration with the full suite of Experian checks, including 'right to work' (RTW), financial checks, and background checks, ensures that every new hire completes all necessary steps.
- **Real-time reporting suite** - This lets you view recruitment activity with configurable dashboards and easily report KPIs using various reports (including EDI reporting).
- **Advanced reporting** - If you like to take your reports to the next level, we can support you. IRIS Recruitment's ATS enables you to build sophisticated, bespoke reports. You get access to Tableau, and your data can also be exported for use in other BI tools.





- **Onboarding** - This dedicated module aims to bridge the gap between your candidate being offered a job and their first day working for your business. It provides each candidate with a personalised portal with access to all the information they need, including contracts, offer letters, and a list of actions to complete. It will also ask for any information required before their first day and can include induction training, login details to various platforms, contact details of key people, and much more.
- **DocuSign** - As part of the onboarding module, you can also enable candidates to electronically sign any documents using DocuSign. This speeds up the process - from days to just to just a matter of minutes.
- **Searchable Talent pool** - You can maximise the potential of every candidate who applies for your job openings by creating a talent pool for future reference. You have the option to create both personal and company-wide folders and notify registered candidates of relevant opportunities. You can also send job alerts to those who have registered for them.
- **HR system integration** - IRIS Recruitment ATS provides exceptional two-way data transfer integration between Cascade HRi and Staffology HR. As a standalone solution, IRIS Recruitment also offers integrations with other HR system providers or supports data transfer through data export.



Data security compliance

Organisations store and process a wealth of personal and sensitive data as part of the recruitment process, so it is vital your software offers the level of protection and functionality you need to stay compliant.

Factors to consider:

- Your solution provider should conduct Independent Penetration Testing to check for the latest hacking vulnerabilities.
- The solution should use secure hosting providers and have robust backup measures.
- The software should also give you tools to:
  - Define security access rights
  - Manage subject access requests
  - Delete data easily in line with privacy policies
  - Put restrictions on the ability to print hard copies

So, you have an amazing ATS; now what?

Your new ATS will not be much use without great candidates applying for jobs.

Thankfully, there's good news: IRIS Recruitment can provide you with a new ATS and quality candidates too.

Our fully managed Recruitment Advertising and Services solution is a low-cost alternative to recruitment agencies, and it can help you fill all roles across your organisation.

We strike a balance, providing you with all the upsides of a traditional agency-style service without the high costs you might associate with it.

Our team maximises the exposure of your job vacancies and finds the best candidates – all while reducing your time-to-hire.

Learn more about how to act fast and expand your talent pool while enjoying complete peace of mind.



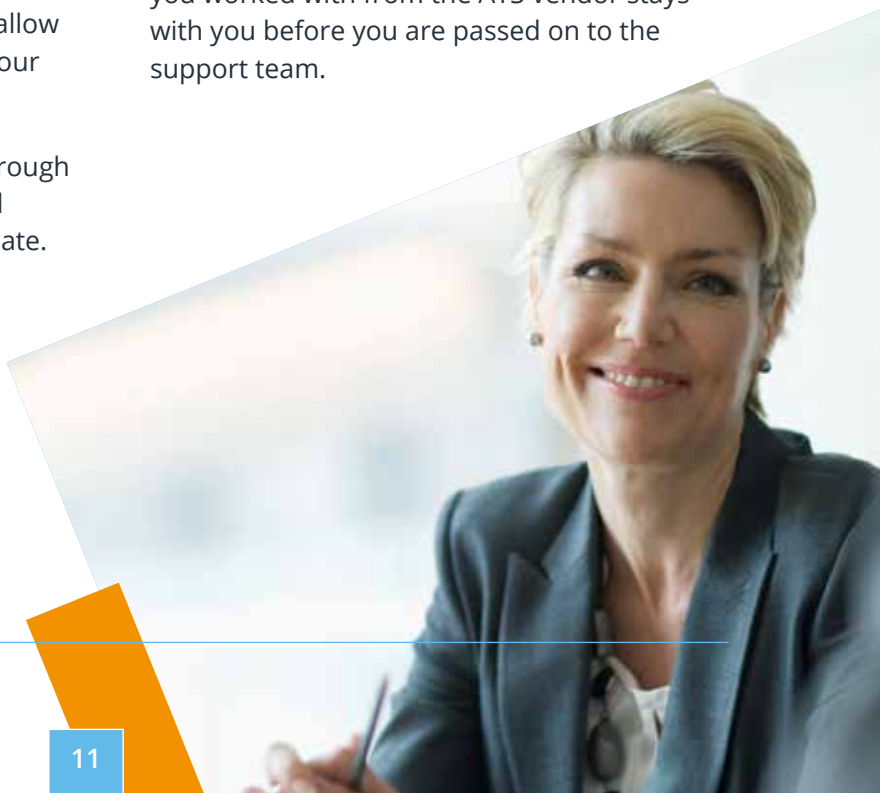
Top tips for implementing your ATS

Over the last 20 years, we've learnt a lot about how to implement and roll out a new ATS in an organisation.

And although every situation is different, here are the golden rules to follow:



1. **Establish a project lead throughout the process.** This is not necessarily a senior stakeholder but someone who strikes that all-important balance between technical confidence and insight into the business' day-to-day.
2. **Set realistic goals.** Remember, rushing only leads to issues. We advise you to set aside 6-8 weeks for the full implementation process. It will be worth it.
3. **Encourage buy-in from key stakeholders from the outset.** This enthusiasm is contagious and sets a positive example for anyone doubtful about your new ATS.
4. **Take the time to map out your current recruitment journey** and identify areas of improvement to ensure you're making the right choices regarding your ATS setup.
5. **Work with your ATS provider** to determine the right level of technology for you and allow them to incorporate best practices into your existing processes.
6. **Allocate yourself some time** to work through the new ATS recruitment journey from all perspectives, including that of the candidate.
7. **Decide whether you need to project manage the process.** We usually handle this at IRIS, so you don't have to worry about that with us.
8. **Make sure staff are trained in the software.** There's nothing worse than dropping software onto someone's shoulders, and their first question is, "How do I sign in?" That's bad for everyone involved. So, does your vendor provide training? We do.
9. **Build in some tests before going live.** This should take up about two of your 6-8 weeks of implementation.
10. **Go live!** Your provider should be able to help you go 'full live' or implement a 'soft go-live', which gives you more time to prepare before linking the system to your site or publishing vacancies. There should be a handover period during this time, during which the consultant you worked with from the ATS vendor stays with you before you are passed on to the support team.



Creating a business case for a new ATS

Sometimes, you need to convince decision-makers in your business that you need a new system to improve things for you and your staff. How do you go about this?



1. Look at all the difficulties you have had in the past. Chart the big problems and the small obstacles that come with **not** using ATS software.

2. Set out **what good ATS software does**. Some colleagues might not appreciate how challenging recruitment is, so link each feature to how it will support your business. This can explain how you need help maximising each vacancy's exposure, your need to engage with candidates effortlessly, the importance of managing applications to spot top talent and how an ATS can help with the complexities of onboarding.

3. Set out what success looks like in terms of resources. This could be how an ATS increases the effectiveness of job adverts, so you **save money on advertising**, how its streamlined processes **save you time**, and how it helps you **retain staff** by delivering a great onboarding experience.

4. Where possible, use **qualitative** and **quantitative** data to support your case.

5. Beyond tackling your current processes, explain how an ATS can **add extra value** to your recruitment strategy. For instance, a good ATS will ensure you can build a talent pool so you don't have to spend as much on advertising.

6. Highlight the **reliability and experience** of your shortlisted vendors. Software vendor Networx, for example, has been in the industry since 2001. Networx went on to join IRIS and become part of IRIS Recruitment.

7. When explaining an ATS to colleagues, **talk them through the implementation** process so they know what to expect.

8. Remember to **present your case** in a way that suits your colleagues. That could be an in-person presentation, online or as a circulated document. Make sure that when you bring everything together, you make it clear how your new ATS will handle past frustrations, deliver on objectives for the future, provide tangible benefits, make a measurable impact, and be provided by a reliable vendor.



Want to know more about our simple and powerful recruitment software?

IRIS Recruitment is an opportunity to up your hiring game and empower your in-house teams.

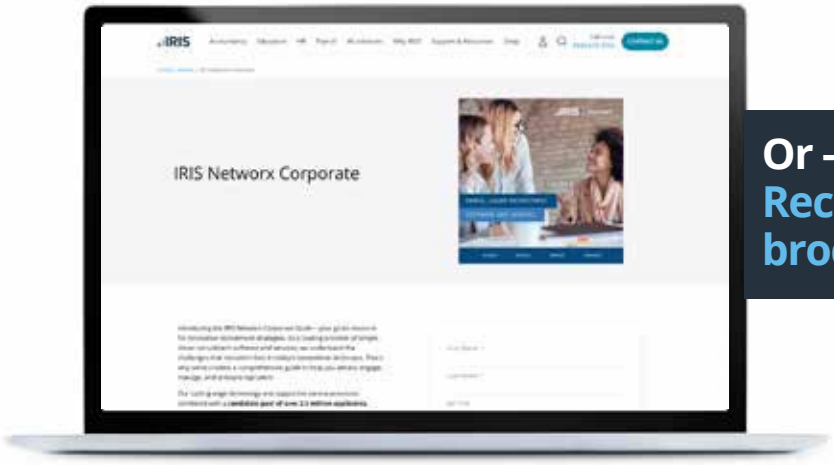
Give your HR specialists all the software tools they need, accessible from anywhere and backed by watertight security.



Want to learn more?



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