



Standard boxes plus stock moldings can transform any kitchen from dull and dreary to dazzling and delightful



Furniture feet

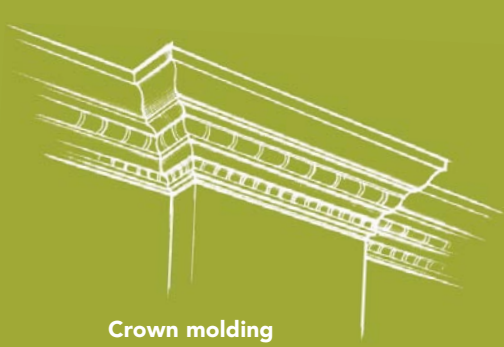
Souped-Up



I've been a builder for more than 25 years, and one of my favorite expressions is "The older I get, the better I was." It's natural to think that things in the past were always better, and quite often it's true. However, one big exception is the cabinets and millwork available to builders these days.

With modern technology, cabinet shops can turn out boxes in almost any size or configuration. But even if you're limited to standard cabinets from a home center, they can be arranged in such a way to add visual interest to any kitchen. The trick is to stop thinking about cabinets in what's come to be known as the *streamlined* approach. We've all seen kitchens composed of 24-in.-deep, 36-in.-tall base cabinets, and equally uniform upper cabinets starting at 18 in. above the counters and ending at the ceiling. These regimented rows of boxes offer plenty of storage, but they also can be just plain boring.

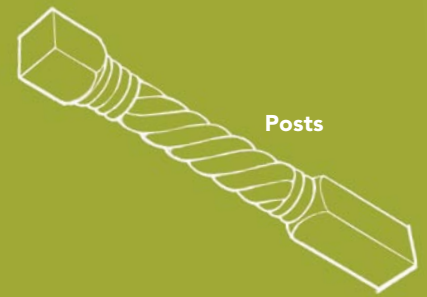
To turn cabinets into eye-catching arrangements that add beauty to an ordinary kitchen, I use a strategy called *coastlining*. I arrange cabinets next to one another so that their lines move in and out, and up and down, like the variations in a rocky shoreline. These differences in height and depth offer several powerful opportunities for visual juice. Shadows formed where cabinets of different depths intersect are prominent places to add detail. And outside corners created by upper cabinets of vary-



Crown molding



Corbels



Posts

Stock Cabinets

ing depths create lots of places to play crown moldings to great effect.

I have a talented crew that does wonderful finish work. So it makes sense, both economically and efficiently, to get basic cabinets from a shop and put my crew to work dressing them up with moldings and carvings. Even the biggest kitchens can be transformed with just a few hundred feet of custom molding.

This is where the fun and creativity live: in the details. We use drawer fronts, end panels, rope moldings, toe-kick treatments, turned legs, pilasters, corbels, furniture feet, and plenty of crown molding to customize each kitchen we build. (The moldings in this article are from White River; see suppliers on p. 83.) The variations are practically limitless, from white beaded cabinets in a farmhouse kitchen (photo left) to the walnut-stained look of a baronial armoire (photo right). The boxes are similar, but the finishes and details differ.

Kitchen islands are another opportunity to make something special out of ordinary boxes. I call this strategy *massing*, which is the arrangement of cabinet boxes to create places for appliances, shelves, or sitting areas. Organized this way, the spaces between the cabinets can be equally useful.

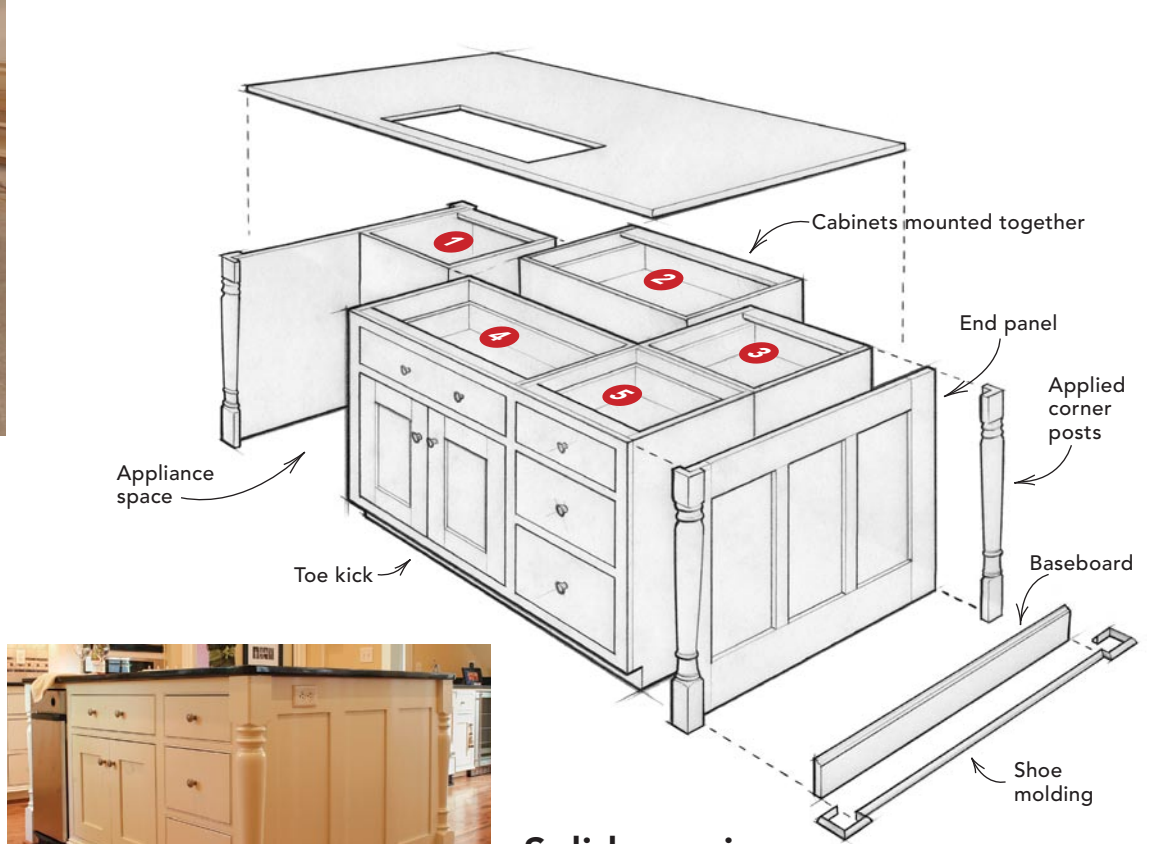
A frequent contributor to *Fine Homebuilding*, Gary Striegler is a custom-home builder in Fayetteville, Ark. Photos by Roe A. Osborn.



MASSING ISLANDS

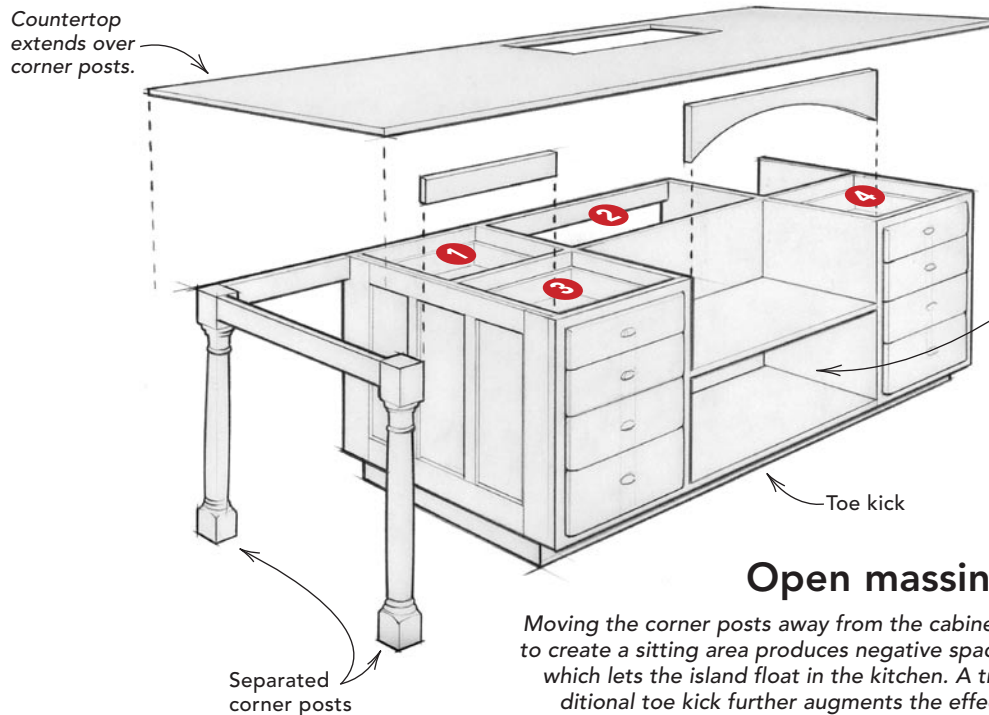


Kitchen islands too often look like a chunk of utilitarian space added to the middle of a kitchen, clunky and uninviting. Breaking up the cabinet-base treatments and varying the cabinets from doors to drawers to appliance stations can add immediate interest to an island grouping (photo above).



Solid massing

Keeping the cabinet boxes tight to one another and then applying corner posts, end panels, and a solid base can give an island the feel of a massive piece of furniture to anchor the kitchen.



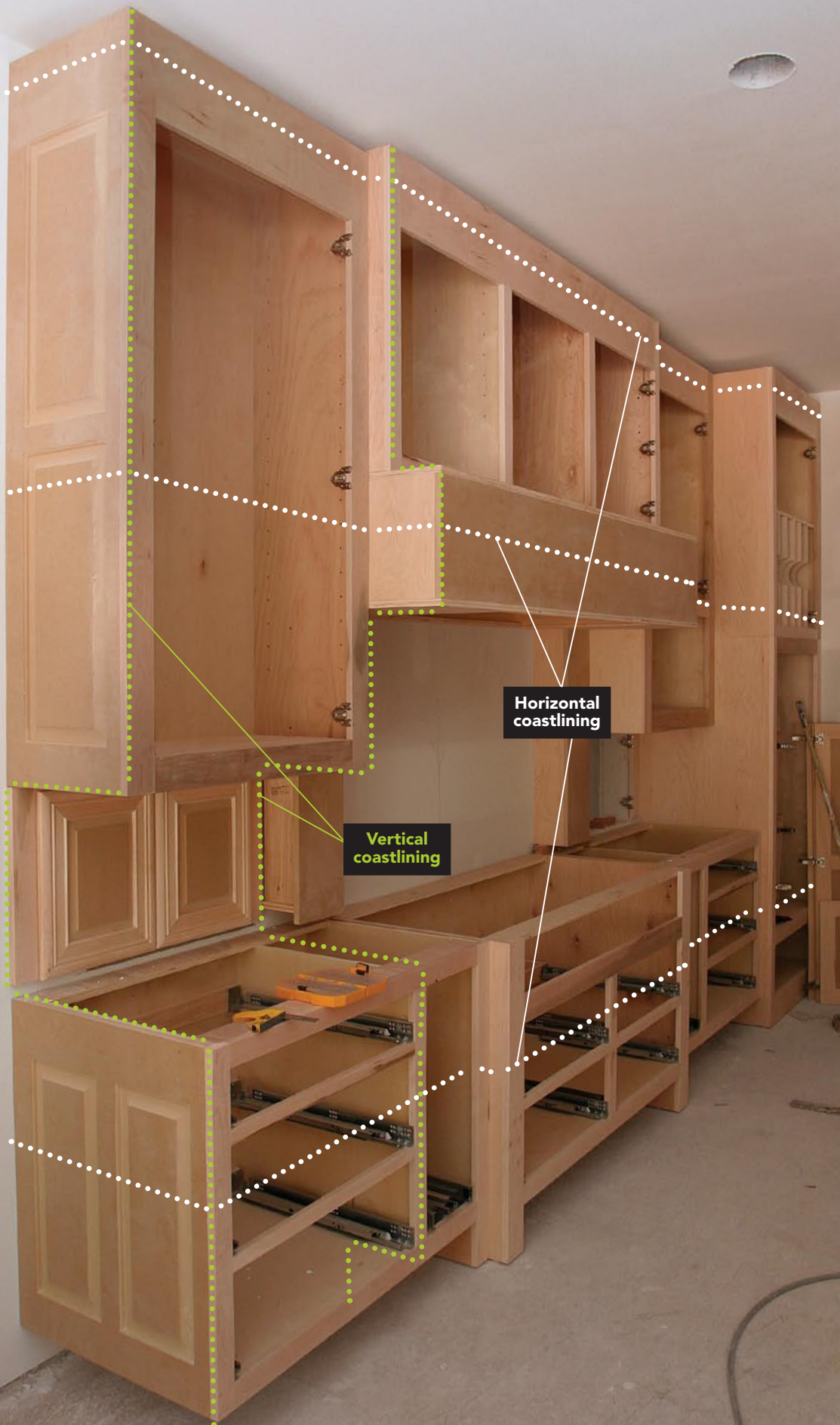
Cabinets are separated by open shelf space.

Open massing

Moving the corner posts away from the cabinets to create a sitting area produces negative space, which lets the island float in the kitchen. A traditional toe kick further augments the effect. Keeping the cabinet boxes apart and finishing the spaces between them as display cases or bookshelves reduce the massive feel of a big island.



COASTLINING CABINETS



Varying the height and depth of the cabinets creates broken lines that are the foundation for an exciting kitchen (photo left). Wall cabinets can be kept even with the ceiling, where continuous crown molding will conceal the cabinet-ceiling joint. Installing some cabinets lower than others also can make the kitchen look as if it was added on to over time. Cabinets for appliances such as a wall oven or range hood are perfect opportunities to add different depths to the wall arrangement.

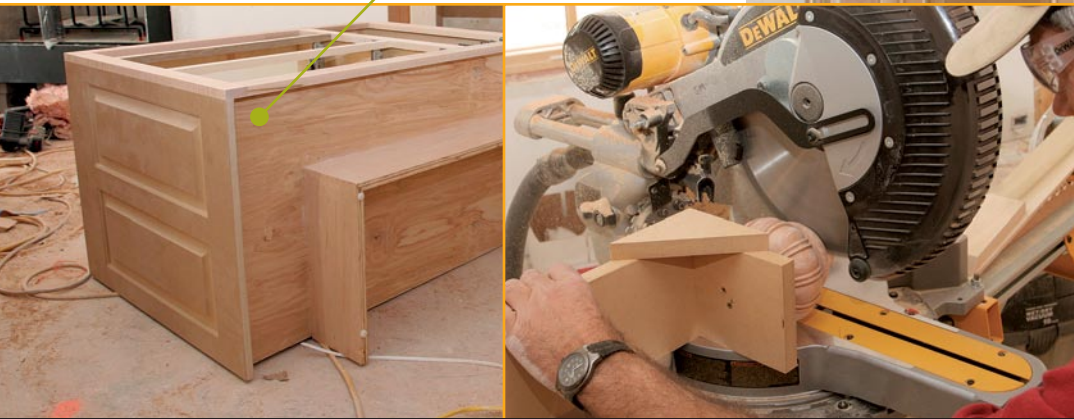
Appliances such as stovetops also create the possibility of varying the depth of base cabinets. The height of base cabinets can vary, too, for specific work areas such as a bread-making station.

Using different cabinet-base treatments for cabinets of varying depths lends the look of assembled furniture to a kitchen. Here, the oven cabinet at the far end has a solid base. The recessed cabinet next to it has a deep toe kick to allow for furniture feet. The stovetop cabinet sports a traditional toe kick, while the end cabinet also has its toe kick recessed for furniture feet.

STYLING ON SITE

Once the cabinet configuration is established, decorative elements boost the effects of coastlining and cabinet groupings. Every time a molding turns a corner, that corner becomes more apparent. And as we've seen, this effect works for both stain-grade as well as paint-grade cabinets (seen here unfinished). For base cabinets, ornamental corner posts augment the coastlining effect. While crown molding and edgebanding provide an overall effect in the kitchen, additional moldings can enhance specific areas. Decorative corbels add visual support to wall cabinets at openings, such as over a sink or a stove. Frames of smaller band molding can make raised end panels come alive. Applied pilasters visually minimize the frames around cabinet doors and drawers, and carvings can add an accent to a bare expanse, such as the housing for a range hood.

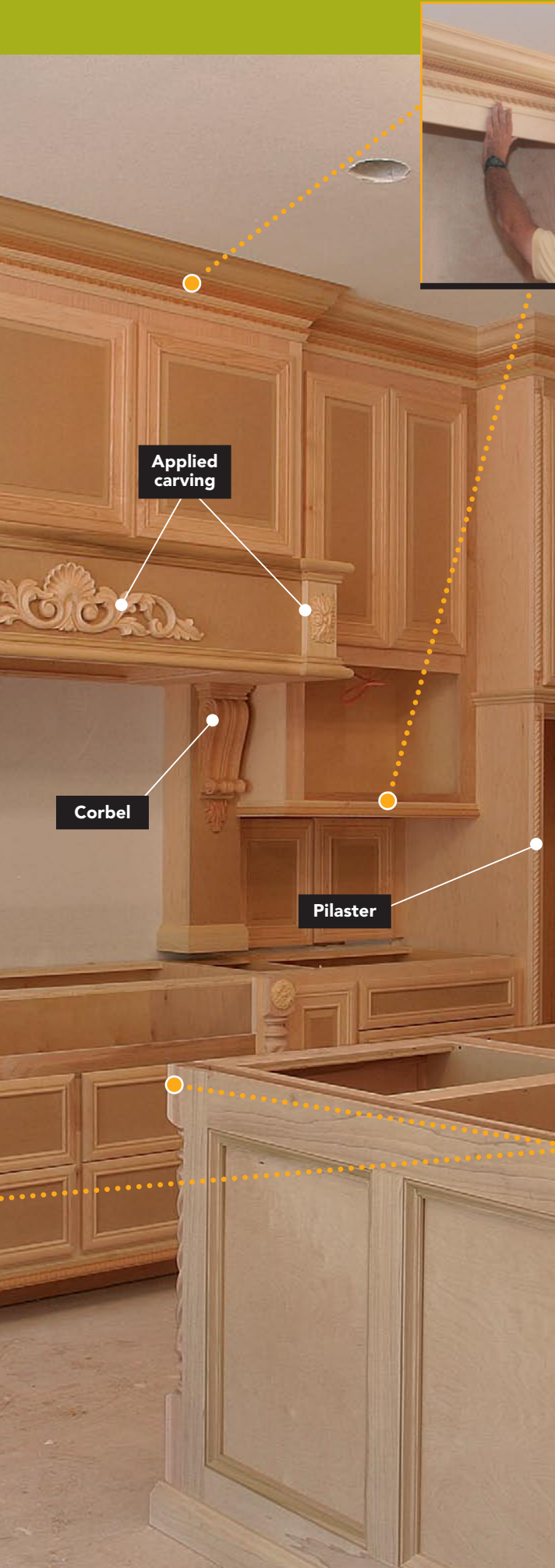
Foot goes here



Furniture feet

Furniture feet give the cabinets the look of, well, furniture. The toe kick on the cabinets is held back from the front to make it less visible (photo above left). Blocks keep the furniture feet above the finished-floor height (photo lower right). They screw to the cabinets from inside. To cut the feet to the right height, screw them to a simple jig that makes cutting them with a miter saw fast and safe (photo above right). And remember that for kitchen cabinets, the feet might look better upside down.





Moldings

Crown wraps the top edge of the cabinetry to finish the intersection between wall cabinets and ceiling. A layer of panel molding adds to the decorative effect (photo above left). Standard panel molding acts as an edgebanding along the bottom edges of both wall and base cabinets to give the cabinets weight and to balance the visual effect of the crown above (photo above right).

Decorative posts

Manufactured ornamental posts can enhance a coastline corner in the base cabinetry. Two cuts on a tablesaw (top photo) create an outside corner post that wraps the cabinet corner (bottom photo). Don't throw out the "waste" pieces. They can be used to finish an end panel, such as on the island in the photo at left.



DECORATIVE MOLDING SUPPLIERS

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