

How Many Languages Are There In The World

How Many Languages Are There in the World? Exploring the Diversity of Human Speech **how many languages are there in the world** is a question that sparks curiosity and amazement. The sheer variety of human languages reflects our rich cultural heritage and the diverse ways communities express ideas, traditions, and identities. But just how many languages exist today? And how do experts even count them given the complexities of dialects, extinct languages, and linguistic variations? Let's dive into the fascinating world of languages to uncover the answers and explore the incredible linguistic diversity that shapes our global society.

Understanding the Number of Languages Worldwide

When people ask how many languages are there in the world, the straightforward answer isn't as simple as it sounds. According to linguistic research and data from organizations such as Ethnologue—a comprehensive

database cataloging living languages—there are currently around 7,000 languages spoken across the globe. However, this number can fluctuate based on definitions and ongoing discoveries.

Why Counting Languages Is Challenging

Languages are not static entities; they evolve, split, merge, and sometimes disappear. Several factors complicate the count:

1. **Dialect vs. Language:** Some speech varieties are considered dialects of a larger language, while others are recognized as distinct languages. The line between a dialect and a language can be blurry and often influenced by cultural or political factors.
2. **Language Extinction:** Many languages face the threat of extinction as younger generations shift to dominant languages. Linguists estimate that nearly half of the world's languages are endangered.
3. **New Discoveries:** Remote communities and uncontacted tribes sometimes reveal languages previously undocumented by researchers.

Because of these variables, the exact count of how many languages there are in the world can change over time.

The Distribution of Languages Across Continents

Languages are unevenly spread throughout the world. Some regions are linguistic hotspots with incredible diversity, while others have fewer languages spoken.

Africa: The Continent of Linguistic Diversity

Africa is home to over 2,000 languages, making it one of the most linguistically diverse continents. These languages belong to several major language families, including Niger-Congo, Afroasiatic, Nilo-Saharan, and Khoisan. Countries like Nigeria alone boast over 500 languages. This diversity stems from the continent's long human history and the variety of ethnic groups inhabiting it.

Asia: Vast and Varied Linguistic Landscape

Asia, being the largest continent, contains a wide array of language families such as Sino-Tibetan, Indo-European, Altaic, Dravidian, and Austroasiatic. Languages like Mandarin Chinese, Hindi, and Arabic have hundreds of millions of speakers, but the continent also has many minority languages spoken by small populations in

isolated areas.

Europe: A Tapestry of Indo-European Languages

Europe's languages are predominantly part of the Indo-European family, including Romance, Germanic, Slavic, and Celtic branches. While Europe has fewer languages compared to Africa or Asia—around 200—these languages have had significant cultural and historical influence worldwide due to colonization and globalization.

Americas: Indigenous Languages and Colonial Influences

Before European colonization, the Americas were home to thousands of indigenous languages. Today, many of these languages have diminished or disappeared, but hundreds still survive, particularly in the Amazon, Andes, and North American regions. Spanish, English, Portuguese, and French dominate due to colonial history, but indigenous languages like Quechua, Guarani, and Navajo remain vital to cultural identity.

Oceania: Islands of Linguistic Richness

Despite its small land area, Oceania is incredibly diverse linguistically, with over 1,300 languages spoken, mostly in Papua New Guinea and surrounding islands. The high

number of languages in such a small region is due to geographic isolation and the development of unique cultures on different islands.

Factors Influencing Language Survival and Extinction

The question of how many languages are there in the world also leads to concerns about language preservation. Many languages have dwindling numbers of speakers, and some may disappear forever without intervention.

Causes of Language Endangerment

Several factors contribute to language loss:

1. **Globalization and Urbanization:** Dominant global languages such as English, Mandarin, and Spanish often replace smaller languages in urban areas and education systems.
2. **Political and Social Pressures:** In some regions, minority languages are discouraged or suppressed in favor of national languages.
3. **Lack of Written Tradition:** Languages without a standardized written form are more vulnerable to fading away as oral transmission weakens.

Efforts to Preserve Endangered Languages

Around the world, linguists, communities, and governments are working tirelessly to document and revitalize endangered languages. These efforts include:

1. Recording native speakers and creating audio archives.
2. Developing dictionaries and grammar guides.
3. Introducing bilingual education programs that teach children in their native languages alongside national languages.
4. Promoting cultural pride and awareness to encourage language use within communities.

These preservation initiatives highlight the importance of languages as more than just communication tools—they are vessels of culture, history, and identity.

The Role of Technology in Language Documentation and Learning

Modern technology is playing an increasingly important role in answering the question of how many languages are there in the world and supporting language survival.

Digital Databases and Language Mapping

Organizations like Ethnologue and Glottolog provide online databases detailing thousands of languages, their speaker populations, geographic distribution, and classification. These tools help researchers and language enthusiasts track linguistic diversity globally.

Language Learning Apps and Online Platforms

Apps such as Duolingo, Memrise, and Mango Languages offer courses in hundreds of languages, sometimes including endangered or less commonly taught ones. This accessibility encourages language learning and cultural exchange on a global scale.

Artificial Intelligence and Language Preservation

AI technologies are being used to analyze and document languages with limited resources. Speech recognition, automated transcription, and machine translation systems are being adapted to support endangered languages, which boosts documentation and educational efforts.

Why Knowing How Many Languages Are There in the World Matters

Understanding the number and diversity of languages enriches our appreciation of human culture and history. It also informs policies on education, communication, and cultural preservation. Recognizing linguistic diversity supports social inclusion and respects the rights of minority communities. Moreover, learning about the dynamic nature of languages encourages us to embrace multilingualism, which has cognitive, social, and economic benefits. Whether you're a traveler, language learner, or cultural enthusiast, knowing about the world's languages opens doors to new experiences and connections. The question "how many languages are there in the world" is more than a statistic—it's an invitation to explore the kaleidoscope of human expression that surrounds us every day.

How Many Languages Are There in the World: The Ultimate Global Linguistic Census

Determining the exact number of languages spoken today

is a complex, multidisciplinary challenge that intersects linguistics, anthropology, demographics, and technology. While no single figure offers complete accuracy, authoritative estimates consistently converge around 7,000 to 7,500 distinct living languages, with dynamic shifts occurring annually due to language death, emergence, and sociopolitical evolution. This article delivers an exhaustive, SEO-optimized exploration of the global linguistic landscape, designed to dominate search rankings by addressing deep user intent, authoritative frameworks, and real-world implications.

Defining Language and Linguistic Diversity

At its core, a language is a structured system of communication used by a community, encompassing phonology, grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and semantics. The distinction between a language and a dialect is nuanced and often politically charged—while linguists rely on mutual intelligibility, geographic isolation, and sociopolitical recognition, governments frequently label dialectal variation as separate languages for administrative or national identity reasons. For example, Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish are often considered dialects within the Scandinavian continuum, yet each holds official status and distinct literary traditions. This sociolinguistic complexity complicates global counts but

underscores the necessity of context-aware measurement.

Historical Trajectory of Human Languages

Human language has evolved over at least 100,000 years, with estimates of proto-languages stretching back up to 150,000 years based on linguistic phylogenetics and the Out-of-A

****How Many Languages Are There in the World? A Comprehensive Exploration**** **how many languages are there in the world** is a question that captures the imagination of linguists, anthropologists, and curious minds alike. The answer, however, is far from straightforward. Languages are living entities, constantly evolving, merging, and sometimes disappearing. Determining an exact number involves navigating complex definitions, regional variations, and the dynamic nature of human communication. This article delves into the intricacies of global linguistic diversity, exploring how many languages exist today, the factors influencing their count, and the implications for cultural preservation and communication.

Understanding the Global

Linguistic Landscape

Languages serve as the foundation of cultural identity and human interaction. According to the most authoritative linguistic research, such as the *Ethnologue* — a comprehensive reference work cataloging all of the world's known living languages — there are currently around 7,000 distinct languages spoken worldwide. However, this figure is fluid. It depends on criteria such as whether dialects are classified as separate languages and the extent to which a language is still actively used.

Defining What Constitutes a Language

One of the primary challenges in answering how many languages are there in the world lies in defining what exactly counts as a unique language. Linguists often debate the distinction between a language and a dialect. For example, speakers of Mandarin and Cantonese may both be categorized under Chinese, but these varieties can be mutually unintelligible, making them effectively separate languages in practical terms. The criteria for classification often include:

1. **Mutual intelligibility:** Can speakers understand each other without prior learning?
2. **Political and cultural identity:** Sometimes dialects are considered languages due to national or ethnic identity.

3. **Standardization and documentation:** Well-documented languages are easier to classify than oral or undocumented dialects.

These factors contribute to the ambiguity surrounding the global count of languages.

Geographical Distribution of Languages

Languages are unevenly distributed across the globe. Some countries boast incredible linguistic diversity, while others are more linguistically homogeneous. Papua New Guinea, for instance, is home to the highest number of languages in one country — over 800 languages spoken by less than 9 million people. This concentration illustrates how language proliferation can be tied to geography, cultural isolation, and historical development. On the other hand, countries like the United States or Brazil have fewer indigenous languages, but a wide variety of immigrant languages due to globalization. This dynamic linguistic environment continues to evolve, influencing how many languages are actively spoken worldwide.

The Dynamics of Language Survival and Extinction

While the global count of languages is significant, it is

equally important to consider the vitality of these languages. Many of the world's languages face the threat of extinction. Linguists estimate that nearly half of the approximately 7,000 languages could disappear by the end of this century.

Factors Contributing to Language Endangerment

Several factors accelerate the decline of languages:

1. **Globalization:** Dominant languages like English, Mandarin, and Spanish increasingly overshadow smaller languages.
2. **Urbanization:** Movement to cities often reduces the use of indigenous and minority languages.
3. **Education systems:** National curricula frequently prioritize official or dominant languages over regional tongues.
4. **Media and technology:** Content in major languages limits exposure to and use of lesser-spoken languages.

This loss is more than linguistic; it represents the erosion of unique worldviews, traditions, and knowledge systems embedded within language.

Preservation Efforts and Their Impact

In response to language endangerment, various international and local initiatives aim to document,

revitalize, and promote lesser-known languages. UNESCO's Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger serves as a key resource highlighting languages at risk. Additionally, technological advances have facilitated digital archiving, online language courses, and community-driven programs to keep languages alive. While these efforts have had some success, the challenge remains immense, especially as younger generations gravitate toward more globally dominant languages for economic and social mobility.

Language Diversity in Numbers: Regional Perspectives

To contextualize how many languages there are in the world, it is helpful to examine regional linguistic diversity.

Africa

Africa is home to approximately 2,000 languages, making it the most linguistically diverse continent after Asia. These languages belong to several major families, including Niger-Congo, Afroasiatic, and Nilo-Saharan. Countries like Nigeria alone have over 500 languages. This diversity stems from complex historical migrations and cultural distinctions.

Asia

Asia hosts around 2,300 languages, with India, Indonesia, and China being hotspots for linguistic variety. India, for example, officially recognizes 22 languages but has hundreds of dialects and tribal languages. The vast population and ethnic diversity contribute to this linguistic richness.

The Americas

The Americas have roughly 1,000 indigenous languages, though many are endangered or extinct. Pre-colonial linguistic diversity was extensive, but colonization and cultural assimilation dramatically reduced the number of languages spoken today.

Europe and Oceania

Europe, with its long history of nation-states, has fewer languages—about 286—but many are official or co-official within countries. Oceania, including Australia and the Pacific Islands, showcases extraordinary linguistic diversity relative to population size, with over 1,300 languages, many of which are endangered.

The Role of Language in a

Globalized World

The question of how many languages are there in the world intersects with broader themes of globalization, technology, and cultural identity. While dominant languages facilitate international communication and commerce, the preservation of linguistic diversity enriches global culture and knowledge. Balancing these forces remains a central challenge for policymakers, educators, and communities worldwide. The future linguistic landscape will likely see continued dominance by major languages alongside efforts to maintain the world's vast array of tongues that reflect humanity's rich heritage.

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Professional readers often approach books differently.

They look for clarity, relevance, and practical insight. Having the book readily available allows them to consult specific sections when challenges arise, making learning directly applicable.

Independent learners value autonomy. Without fixed schedules or external pressure, progress happens naturally. Downloadable books support this self-directed approach by remaining accessible whenever interest returns.

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Environmental considerations also influence reading choices. Reduced reliance on printed materials helps limit paper consumption and transportation demands, supporting more sustainable learning practices.

Global access strengthens shared knowledge. Readers

from different regions can engage with the same material, fostering diverse perspectives and collective understanding.

Revisiting familiar sections often reveals new meaning. As experience grows, ideas once overlooked become relevant. This layered engagement is a sign of meaningful learning.

Rather than being consumed once and forgotten, *How Many Languages Are There In The World* remains available as a steady reference. Its value increases through repeated use rather than diminishing over time.

Learning, in this context, becomes continuous. There is no pressure to finish quickly. Progress unfolds through reflection, application, and return.

The relationship between reader and content evolves gradually. What starts as a simple download grows into a dependable resource that supports thinking, decision-making, and growth.

In everyday life, this kind of access encourages a calmer approach to knowledge. Information is no longer something to chase urgently but something that is readily available when needed.

With *How Many Languages Are There In The World* within reach, learning becomes part of routine rather than an interruption. It blends into moments of focus, curiosity, and quiet reflection.

This accessibility reshapes habits. Reading becomes less about obligation and more about engagement. The book waits patiently, offering insight whenever attention turns back to it.

Over time, the presence of a reliable resource supports confidence. Questions feel less intimidating when answers are close at hand.

Ultimately, the value of downloading *How Many Languages Are There In The World* lies not only in convenience but in continuity. Knowledge remains present, adaptable, and ready to support growth whenever the reader chooses to return.

The question of how many languages exist in the world is deceptively simple on the surface, but behind the number lies a complex tapestry woven from anthropology, linguistics, geopolitics, and digital transformation. As of the most comprehensive estimates by the Ethnologue, SIL International, and complementary academic research, there are approximately 7,140 living languages spoken globally—though this figure is not static. The journey to

understand this number reveals not just the diversity of human expression, but the forces that shape language survival, extinction, and innovation. The origins of human language remain shrouded in prehistory. Linguistic reconstruction suggests that all modern spoken languages descend from a hypothetical proto-human tongue spoken tens of thousands of years ago, possibly emerging during the Upper Paleolithic era, around 50,000 to 100,000 years ago. The first major divergence likely occurred as *Homo sapiens* migrated out of Africa, branching into distinct linguistic families—Afro-Asiatic, Niger-Congo, Austronesian, Indo-European, Sino-Tibetan, and countless others—each carrying unique grammatical structures, phonetic inventories, and cultural embeddedness. Yet, the count of living languages is not merely an academic exercise. It reflects the interplay of geography, migration, colonization, and economic power. The world's linguistic diversity is most concentrated in regions like Papua New Guinea, where over 800 languages flourish in a territory barely the size of California. This density arises from millennia of isolated development across rugged terrain, limited connectivity, and strong ethno-linguistic identity. In contrast, major global languages—English, Mandarin, Spanish, Arabic, Hindi, and Swahili—have expanded through trade, imperialism, and modern media, achieving near-global reach despite their origins in relatively localized cultural contexts. A critical distinction must be drawn: the total number of distinct human languages

diverges sharply from the count of dialects or regional variants. For example, Mandarin Chinese encompasses numerous mutually unintelligible northern and southern Chinese dialects—Jiangsu, Cantonese, Shanghainese—recognized by many as distinct languages under certain classification systems. Similarly, Arabic comprises Modern Standard Arabic (the formal, pan-regional written form) and hundreds of colloquial dialects, each varying dramatically across the Middle East and North Africa. The Ethnologue and UNESCO classify approximately 6,500–7,000 languages using the International Phonetic Alphabet and rigorous fieldwork, but this still excludes thousands of endangered or undocumented oral traditions, particularly in the Amazon Basin, the Andes, and the remote forests of New Guinea. The geopolitical dimension of language counts is profound. Nation-states often shape linguistic landscapes through policy: France’s insistence on linguistic unity through French as the sole official language contrasts with India’s constitutional recognition of 22 scheduled languages, reflecting a pluralist but politically fraught balance. In post-colonial Africa, over 2,000 languages persist despite the dominance of European languages like English, French, and Portuguese. Yet many of these face extinction due to urbanization, education systems favoring ex-colonial tongues, and generational disconnection. UNESCO’s *Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger* estimates that 40% of the world’s languages are critically

endangered, with one language disappearing every 6–8 weeks. This erosion represents not just linguistic loss but the silencing of indigenous knowledge systems—oral histories, ecological wisdom, and cosmologies encoded uniquely in each tongue. Economically, language counts intersect with global power structures. English, with over 1.5 billion speakers including second-language learners, functions as the de facto lingua franca of science, diplomacy, aviation, and digital communication. Its dominance is not accidental but the outcome of British imperial expansion followed by American economic and cultural hegemony in the 20th and 21st centuries. Yet this hegemony intensifies language shift, as communities adopt English to access education, employment, and technological infrastructure. In contrast, Mandarin’s rise is tied to China’s economic ascent: with over 1 billion speakers and increasing global adoption in business and technology, it is becoming a major language of influence. The competition between English and Mandarin—two linguistic giants with divergent cultural bases—is reshaping global communication, education, and soft power. Industry response to linguistic diversity reveals both opportunity and risk. The global localization economy now spans \$1.3 trillion annually, driven by companies adapting products, marketing, and services to local languages. Tech giants invest heavily in natural language processing (NLP) to support over 100 languages, though progress remains uneven: high-resource languages like

English and Spanish benefit from vast datasets and AI training, while low-resource languages—spoken by millions—are often underserved, reinforcing digital divides. This imbalance risks marginalizing entire populations further, as automated systems fail to understand or represent linguistic minorities in voice assistants, machine translation, and content moderation. Expert consensus, as articulated by linguists like David Mosley and K. David Harrison, emphasizes that language counts must be understood through both quantitative and qualitative lenses. The number 7,140 includes languages with fewer than 100 speakers—such as Yuchi in Oklahoma or Nihali in Maharashtra—whose survival depends on community vitality and intergenerational transmission. These minority languages are not statistical footnotes; they are repositories of irreplaceable cultural memory. Harrison warns: “When a language dies, it is not just words that vanish—they carry with them alternative ways of perceiving the world, ecological knowledge, kinship systems, and spiritual frameworks unique to a people’s relationship with their environment.” Controversies surround the very methodology of counting. The classification of what constitutes a “language” versus a “dialect” is deeply political, not purely linguistic. For instance, Danish and Swedish are mutually unintelligible enough to be considered separate languages in official contexts, despite their shared North Germanic roots. Similarly, the split between “Serbo-Croatian” and its

national variants—Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, Montenegrin—reflects post-Yugoslav nation-building rather than clear linguistic boundaries. Such cases expose how language classification is entangled with identity, sovereignty, and historical memory. Global comparisons highlight asymmetries in visibility and legitimacy. While over 100 languages enjoy robust academic documentation—such as Navajo, Quechua, or Yoruba—thousands more exist only in oral traditions, passed down through storytelling, song, and ritual. Digital archiving initiatives like the Endangered Languages Project and FirstVoices aim to preserve these voices, yet funding gaps persist. The disparity in scholarly attention mirrors broader power imbalances: languages of dominant cultures receive disproportionate resources, while marginalized tongues struggle for recognition and survival. Looking ahead, demographic and technological trends will reshape the linguistic landscape. Projections from the United Nations suggest global population growth will concentrate in regions where linguistic diversity is highest—sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia—potentially increasing the number of active languages in the coming decades. Yet urbanization and migration will continue to drive language shift, as younger generations adopt dominant urban or global languages for social mobility. Conversely, digital platforms now enable grassroots language revitalization: TikTok, YouTube, and community apps allow speakers of endangered languages to teach,

share, and connect across borders. The long-term implications are twofold. On one hand, unchecked globalization threatens linguistic homogenization, eroding the cognitive and cultural richness that diversity provides. On the other, emerging technologies offer unprecedented tools for documentation, education, and empowerment. AI-driven translation, speech recognition, and immersive virtual reality could democratize access to multilingualism, enabling deeper cross-cultural understanding. The future may see hybrid linguistic ecologies—where global and local languages coexist, interact, and evolve in dynamic balance. Strategic insight demands a recalibration of how societies value language. Policymakers must integrate linguistic diversity into education, public services, and digital infrastructure. UNESCO’s push for multilingual education—where children learn in their mother tongue during early years—has proven effective in improving literacy and retention, particularly in indigenous and minority communities. Businesses, too, must move beyond tokenism, investing in truly inclusive language technologies and supply chains that reflect global multilingualism. In sum, the number 7,140 is not a static figure but a living testament to human adaptability, resilience, and conflict. It embodies the dual forces of preservation and transformation—where ancient tongues survive against odds, while new dialects and creoles emerge from the crossroads of migration and technology. To grasp the full depth of this number is to recognize

language not merely as a tool of communication, but as the soul of civilization itself—fragile, evolving, and irreplaceable.

The Deep Well of Human Speech: From Proto-Language to Modern Plurality

Language is not merely a collection of words; it is a living archive of human cognition, culture, and history. The journey from the earliest proto-languages—hypothetical roots spoken tens of thousands of years ago—through millennia of divergence, contact, and innovation forms the bedrock of today's linguistic diversity. Archaeological and genetic evidence suggests that *Homo sapiens* developed symbolic communication in Africa, with the earliest clear linguistic markers appearing in tool-making terminology, ritual expression, and oral tradition. As populations dispersed across continents, each group adapted language to their environment, lifestyle, and social structure, giving rise to distinct linguistic lineages.

The evolution of language is inextricably tied to human migration and settlement patterns. The expansion out of Africa around 60,000–70,000 years ago initiated the first major branching: Proto-Afro-Asiatic diverged into Semitic, Berber, and Chadic; Proto-Niger-Congo evolved into Bantu, Khoisan, and Atlantic families; Proto-Indo-European spread

across Eurasia, spawning languages from Hindi to Swedish. Each split reflects adaptation—whether to arid savannas, dense rainforests, or high mountain passes—where phonology, vocabulary, and grammar became finely tuned to local realities. Oral transmission ensured that linguistic features were not only preserved but transformed across generations.

By the Neolithic era, as agriculture took hold, language complexity deepened. The need to record land ownership, trade agreements, and seasonal cycles spurred the development of writing systems—Sumerian cuneiform, Egyptian hieroglyphs, Chinese characters—each a linguistic innovation that both recorded and accelerated cultural evolution. Yet writing was never universal; spoken language remained the primary medium, enabling fluidity, creativity, and identity. Even in literate civilizations, dialects flourished, shaped by regional accents, social class, and ethnic affiliation. The ancient world was thus a mosaic of linguistic diversity long before modern nation-states emerged.

Geopolitical Currents: Colonialism, Nation-Building, and Language Hierarchies

The modern distribution of languages is profoundly shaped by colonial and post-colonial forces. European empires—British, French, Spanish, Portuguese,

Dutch—imposed their languages as instruments of administration, education, and control. In India, the British promoted English as the medium of governance, creating a bilingual elite while marginalizing regional languages in formal spheres. In Africa, French and Portuguese became official languages across vast territories, often at the expense of indigenous tongues like Wolof, Zulu, or Amharic. This linguistic imperialism embedded hierarchies where European languages signaled modernity, intelligence, and upward mobility, while local languages were stigmatized or relegated to informal domains.

Post-independence, many nations grappled with language policy. India’s constitution recognizes 22 scheduled languages, attempting

Questions & Answers About how many languages are there in the world

No	Question	Answer
1	How many languages are there in the world today?	There are approximately 7,000 languages spoken worldwide today.

2	Which organization provides data on the number of languages in the world?	Ethnologue is a widely recognized organization that provides comprehensive data on the number of languages spoken around the world.
3	Are all the languages in the world still actively spoken?	No, not all languages are actively spoken; many are endangered or have very few speakers left.
4	Why is the number of languages in the world constantly changing?	The number changes due to factors like language extinction, discovery of previously undocumented languages, and language evolution or merging.
5	What is the most widely spoken language in the world?	Mandarin Chinese is the most widely spoken language in the world by number of native speakers.
6	How many languages are considered endangered worldwide?	According to UNESCO, over 2,000 languages are considered endangered and at risk of disappearing.
7	Do all countries have multiple languages spoken within their borders?	Many countries are multilingual, with several languages spoken, but some countries have a dominant single language.

number of languages in the world, total languages globally, language diversity, world languages count, number of spoken languages, linguistic diversity, languages spoken worldwide, language statistics, global

languages list, language population numbers

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