



An Extended Guide · No. 1969

Phone Won't Charge? Clean the Port Before You Buy Anything

A safe, free-first fix — then test
the cable and charger in order

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Before you spend a dime, let's look in the port

If your phone has stopped charging, or only charges when you hold the cord at a funny angle, please don't rush out and buy a new phone just yet. Nine times out of ten this is a small, fixable thing — and it often costs nothing at all.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. In 30-plus years of helping folks with their gear, a phone that 'won't charge' is one of the calls I get most. And a surprising number of times, the culprit is simply a plug of pocket lint packed into the little charging hole on the bottom of the phone.

So we're going to do this the calm, orderly way. First we'll clean the port out safely — gently, with the right tools, never the wrong ones. Then, if that doesn't do it, we'll test the cable, then the charger, then the outlet, one at a time, so you know exactly what's wrong before you buy a single thing.

★ Don't let a four-dollar problem cost you four hundred

I've watched good people nearly replace a perfectly fine phone over a bit of lint. Walk through this guide first. If you'd rather I just take a look, call or text me at (330) 200-8042 — often I can talk you through it in a few minutes, free.

The whole guide, on one page

If you remember only these things, you'll solve most 'won't charge' troubles without spending anything.

- ❑ **Turn the phone off first** — always, before you clean the port.
- ❑ **Look in the port** with a bright light. Lint packed in the bottom is the number-one cause.
- ❑ **Clean it gently** with a wooden or plastic toothpick, or a short puff of dry compressed air. Nothing metal, ever.
- ❑ **Then test in order:** a known-good cable first, then a different charger and outlet.
- ❑ If a new cable fixes it, the cable was bad. If a new charger fixes it, the charger or outlet was bad.
- ❑ If it's still dead after all that, the trouble is deeper — and it's time to have someone look.

✓ Go in this order and you can't get lost

Clean, then cable, then charger, then outlet. Change one thing at a time. Whatever makes it start charging again is your answer — no guessing, no buying the wrong part.

Why a charging port fills up with lint

It helps to picture what's actually happening down in that little hole, because once you do, the fix makes perfect sense.

Your phone lives in a pocket or a purse, and pockets are full of lint, dust, and crumbs. The charging port is an open hole facing downward, so every time the phone goes in a pocket, a little more fuzz gets pressed in. Over months, it packs down into a tight gray plug at the very bottom.

Here's the part that fools people: the phone still looks clean, and the cable still slides in. But the lint sits between the cable's tip and the metal contacts at the bottom of the port, so the two can't touch properly. The phone charges weakly, only at one angle, or not at all.

✓ The tell-tale sign it's lint

If the cable has to be pushed in extra hard, or the charger only works when you wiggle or prop the cord 'just so,' that's classic packed-in lint. A clean port lets the cable click in and sit snug on its own.

Read this before you put anything in the port

This is a two-minute job and a safe one — as long as you follow a few firm rules. I mean these ones plainly.

! Never put metal in a charging port

Do NOT stick a pin, a needle, a safety pin, a paper clip, a knife tip, or any other metal object into the charging port. The port has tiny electrical contacts at the bottom, and metal can bend them, short them out, or give you a small shock — turning a free fix into an expensive repair. Power the phone off first. Use only a wooden or plastic toothpick, very gently, or a short burst of dry compressed air. Never use water, spit, alcohol, or any liquid, and never force anything in. If it won't come loose easily, stop.

I know a bent paper clip is right there in the drawer and it's tempting. Please don't. The contacts down there are delicate and they carry power. A wooden toothpick can't bend them or short them, and it does the job just as well with a little patience.

! Gentle is the whole trick

You are lifting lint out, not scraping or digging. If you find yourself pressing hard or prying, back off. Forcing it is how pins get bent and ports get cracked.

The few simple things that do the job

You almost certainly have these around the house already. No special kit required.

- **A wooden or plastic toothpick** — the single most useful tool. Soft enough that it can't hurt the contacts.
- **A bright light or a flashlight** — your phone's own flashlight, a desk lamp, or a headlamp, so you can actually see inside.
- **A can of dry compressed air** (optional) — the kind sold for keyboards. Short bursts only, held upright.
- **A soft, dry brush** (optional) — a clean, dry small paintbrush or a soft toothbrush for the very edge of the port.
- **A magnifier or your reading glasses** — the port is tiny, and seeing clearly makes this far easier.

✓ A phone camera makes a fine magnifier

If you have a second phone or a tablet, open its camera, point it at the port, and zoom in. The packed lint shows up clearly on the bigger screen, so you can see what you're working on.

Step one: turn the phone all the way off

Before anything goes near the port, the phone goes off. This keeps both you and the phone safe while you work.

A charging port carries electricity, so cleaning it while the phone is on is a small but real risk — to the phone's contacts and, now and then, to you. Powering down removes that worry entirely. Hold the power button (or the button combination your phone uses) until it offers to shut down, then let it turn fully off.

If you're not sure how to turn your particular phone off, that's a perfectly normal question — the steps differ from phone to phone. Your phone's manual or its maker's help page spells it out, and I'm glad to walk you through it too.

! Unplug it, then power it down

If the phone is connected to a charger, unplug it first. Then shut the phone off completely — not just the screen dark, but all the way off — before you look inside the port.

Step two: lift the lint out, gently

Here's the heart of the whole thing, done slowly and safely. Take your time — there's no rush.

Hold the phone steady under a bright light and look into the port. You'll likely see a soft gray mat of lint pressed against the bottom. Rest the tip of the wooden toothpick along the back wall of the port, slide it to the bottom, and gently curl it toward you to lift the lint out. It often comes free in one surprising little gray clump.

Go back in and repeat until the bottom looks clean and the metal contacts are visible again. Keep every motion light. You're coaxing lint out, never scraping metal or prying at anything that resists.

✓ A short puff of air helps

If you have a can of dry compressed air, hold it upright and give the port one or two short bursts to blow loose bits free. Keep the can level so no liquid sprays out, and never blow with your mouth — your breath carries moisture.

Step three: try charging again

With the port clean, turn the phone back on, plug in your usual cable, and watch for the charging sign. Often, that's the whole repair.

Give it a moment. A phone that was nearly empty can take a minute to show the charging symbol. If the cable now clicks in snug and the phone starts charging and holds steady without you propping the cord, congratulate yourself — the lint was the problem, and you fixed it for free.

If it's still not charging, or charges only when you hold the cord a certain way, don't worry and don't buy anything yet. That just means we move on to testing the cable, the charger, and the outlet, which is exactly what the next few pages cover.

★ Most of my 'won't charge' calls end right here

I'd guess more than half the time, a careful port cleaning is the entire fix. If yours is charging again, lovely. If not, keep reading — we'll find it together, and you can always call me at (330) 200-8042.

Two kinds of households, two sets of needs

This job looks a little different depending on whether it's your own phone in your hands or you're guiding someone else. The steps are the same; the approach shifts.

If you're fixing your own phone

You can see it, feel it, and take your time. Your goal is a steady hand and good light, and the patience to go one step at a time.

- Work at a table with a bright lamp, not in your lap on the couch.
- Rest your elbows down so your hands stay steady on the small port.
- Do one thing, then test — clean, test; new cable, test; and so on.
- Keep the lint you pull out on a tissue, so you can see it worked.

If you're helping a parent or friend over the phone

You can't see what they see, so your job is to slow down and describe each step plainly, letting them do the looking and the gentle work.

- Have them turn the phone off first and say when it's done.
- Ask what they see in the port under a light — gray fuzz, or clean metal.
- Walk them through the toothpick slowly; remind them, nothing metal.
- If they're unsure or it resists, it's a fine moment to call me in.

★ A charging port is a perfect quick visit

This is one of those jobs that's genuinely fast and satisfying in person. I bring good light and a steady hand, clean the port safely, and test every part so you leave knowing it's truly fixed. Call (330) 200-8042.

If cleaning didn't do it, test in a sensible order

When the port is clean and the phone still won't charge, something in the chain is at fault. The trick is to check each link one at a time.

Think of charging as a little chain: the outlet, the charger block, the cable, the port, and the phone's battery. If any one link is broken, nothing flows. We'll test them from the easiest and cheapest to swap on outward, so you spend nothing until you have to.

The golden rule is change only one thing at a time. If you swap the cable and the charger at once and it starts working, you won't know which one was guilty — and you might throw out a perfectly good part. One change, one test, then the next.

✓ Keep one cable you trust completely

Set aside one cable you know works perfectly — maybe label it 'test.' When anything won't charge, it's the first thing you reach for, and it instantly tells a bad cable from a bigger problem. More on this in our guide on telling your cables apart.

Test number one: the cable

Cables are the part that wears out most, and they're the cheapest to rule out, so we check them first.

Take a different cable that you know is good — ideally the one that came with the phone, or your labeled 'test' cable — and try charging with it, using the same charger and outlet as before. If the phone now charges, the original cable was the problem and you can retire it.

Cables usually fail right where the cord meets the plug, from being bent night after night. The damage is often invisible. That's why swapping in a known-good cable is a far more reliable test than squinting at the old one for frays.

✓ Make sure it's the right kind of cable

A charge-only cable will charge but won't move data, and the wrong plug won't fit at all. If you're not certain your test cable matches the phone, our guides on telling cables apart and on buying a replacement cable sort that out.

Test number two: the charger and the outlet

If a known-good cable didn't fix it, the next links to check are the charger block and the outlet it's plugged into.

Try a different charger block — another phone's wall charger works fine for this — with your known-good cable. If that brings the phone to life, the first charger block was the fault. These do wear out or quietly die, and they're inexpensive to replace.

If a new block doesn't help either, move the whole setup to a different outlet. Outlets on a switch, on a dead power strip, or on a tripped circuit can all look fine and deliver nothing. Plug straight into a wall outlet you know works — say, one a lamp lights up from.

! Be a little careful with cheap chargers

A bargain-bin, no-name charger block is one place I'd spend a few dollars more for a reputable maker. We cover shopping for a safe charger in a separate guide — it's worth a look before you replace one.

Test number three: still nothing? It's deeper

If you've cleaned the port, tried a known-good cable, and tried a different charger and outlet, and the phone still won't charge — that actually tells you something useful.

You've now ruled out the easy, cheap causes. What's left is deeper inside: a damaged charging port, a worn-out battery, or something on the phone's board. These aren't things to pry at yourself, and no amount of new cables will fix them.

This is the point to stop buying parts and have someone look. The good news is that you'll walk in knowing it isn't the cable, the charger, or the outlet — which saves time and often money on a repair. A worn port can sometimes be replaced for far less than a new phone.

★ Let me take a look before you give up on it

A phone that won't charge after all these tests is worth a second opinion. I can tell you whether it's a repair worth making or time for a new phone — straight talk, no sales pitch. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

What if you charge on a pad or stand?

If your phone charges wirelessly by resting on a pad, the port isn't even in the picture — so the things to check are a little different.

Wireless charging needs the phone centered just right on the pad, so the first fix is simply to nudge it until the charging sign appears. A case that's very thick, or one with metal or a magnet in the wrong spot, can also block it. Try again with the case off.

After that, test the pad's own cable and charger exactly as we did above — the pad is powered by a cable and block, and those wear out too. If wireless still won't work but a cable in the port does, the pad is the problem, not the phone.

✓ A clean port still matters

Even if you usually charge on a pad, keep the port clean for the days you need to plug in. And if you're curious how wireless charging works, our wireless-charging guide walks through it in plain words.

A few other simple things worth a glance

Once in a while a phone 'won't charge' for a reason that isn't the port, the cable, or the charger at all. These are quick to rule out.

- **The screen just won't show it:** a fully dead phone can take several minutes on the charger before any sign appears. Give it time.
- **Extreme heat or cold:** a phone left in a hot car or a freezing one may pause charging to protect itself until it returns to room temperature.
- **A frozen phone:** now and then the phone itself is locked up. A normal restart, once it has a little power, can clear it.
- **A loose or switched outlet:** worth double-checking that the outlet is live and not controlled by a wall switch.

✓ Warm or cold, just wait

If the phone feels hot or came in from the cold, set it somewhere room-temperature and try again in a little while. It's protecting its battery, and it will usually pick right back up on its own.

When the battery itself is simply worn out

Batteries don't last forever. If the port is clean and every cable and charger checks out, an aging battery may be the real story.

After a few years of daily charging, a battery holds less and less. The phone might charge but drain unusually fast, shut off with charge still showing, or struggle to climb past a certain point. That's wear, not something you did wrong.

Many phones have a battery-health screen in their settings that shows how much life the battery has left. A battery can often be replaced for a good deal less than a new phone — and that's a repair worth asking about before you replace the whole thing.

! A swollen battery is a different matter — act now

If your phone feels puffy, the case is bowing or lifting apart, or the screen is being pushed up, stop charging it and stop using it right away. A swollen battery is a fire risk. Don't press on it or toss it in the trash — take it to a battery-recycling drop-off, and see our guide on a swollen battery. If it's hot, hissing, or smoking, get away from it and call 911.

The mistakes I most want you to avoid

A few honest missteps turn an easy fix into a costly one. Knowing them ahead of time keeps you out of trouble.

- **Using something metal:** a pin, needle, or paper clip can bend the contacts or short them out. Wood or plastic only.
- **Cleaning with the phone on:** always power it off first — it's safer for you and the phone.
- **Using water or liquid:** no water, spit, or alcohol inside the port. Dry tools and dry air only.
- **Forcing the cable or the tool:** if it resists, stop. Forcing is how ports crack and pins bend.
- **Buying a new phone first:** the priciest fix should be the last one you try, not the first.

! When in doubt, don't dig

If the lint won't lift out easily, or you can't tell what you're looking at down there, that's the moment to stop and get a second pair of eyes. A careful look beats a cracked port every time.

Keeping the port clean so this doesn't come back

A little prevention means you may never have to do this again. None of it takes real effort.

The lint comes from pockets and bags, so anything that keeps fuzz away from the port helps. Some folks carry the phone in a pocket on its own, away from tissues and loose change. A case with a small flap or plug over the port keeps most of it out, too.

Every few months, shine a light in the port and give it a quick look. Catching a thin layer of lint early — a single gentle pass with a toothpick — is far easier than digging out a packed-down plug a year from now.

✓ A quick check when you clean your glasses

Tie it to a habit you already have. When you wipe your reading glasses or dust the nightstand, glance in the charging port while you're at it. A ten-second look keeps the lint from ever building up.

When it's time to call someone in

There's no shame in handing this off. Knowing when to call is its own kind of smart.

Reach out if the lint won't come loose without force, if the cable feels loose or wobbly in a clean port, if the phone still won't charge after you've tested the cable, charger, and outlet, or if anything down in the port looks bent, broken, or burnt. Those point to a repair, not a cleaning.

And call right away if the phone is hot, puffy, or swollen — that's a safety matter, not a charging one, and it's covered in our swollen-battery guide. For the ordinary stuff, a quick visit or even a phone call usually sorts it out.

★ A phone call first often saves a visit

Before you do anything drastic, call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and tell me what you're seeing. Plenty of times I can tell you the fix on the spot. When it needs hands on it, a first visit is a flat \$99, and screen-share help is \$49.

Your quick reference, start to finish

The short version to lean on any time a phone stops charging.

- ❑ Turn the phone all the way off before you touch the port.
- ❑ Look inside with a bright light — lint is the usual villain.
- ❑ Lift lint out gently with a wooden or plastic toothpick. Nothing metal.
- ❑ A short puff of dry compressed air can help. No water or liquid.
- ❑ Power back on and try your usual cable.
- ❑ Still trouble? Test a known-good cable, then a different charger, then a different outlet — one at a time.
- ❑ Dead after all that? It's deeper — have someone look before you buy a new phone.

★ Keep this guide in the drawer

You don't have to hold any of this in your head. Keep these pages where you keep your cords, and when in doubt, I'm a phone call away at (330) 200-8042.

Common Questions

The questions I hear most about a phone that won't charge, answered plainly.

Q: Can I use a pin or a safety pin to clean the port?

No, please don't. Anything metal can bend or short the little contacts at the bottom of the port, and it can give you a small shock. Power the phone off and use a wooden or plastic toothpick, very gently, or a short puff of dry compressed air.

Q: How do I know if it's lint and not a broken port?

Clean it gently first and look. If a cable now clicks in snug and the phone charges and holds steady, it was lint. If the port looks bent, burnt, or the cable still wobbles in a clean port, that points to a repair, and it's worth having someone look.

Q: My phone charges only when I hold the cord a certain way — why?

That's the classic sign of packed-in lint holding the cable away from the contacts, or a worn cable or port. Clean the port first, then try a known-good cable. One of those usually solves it.

Q: Is it safe to use compressed air?

Yes, if you hold the can upright and use short bursts so no liquid sprays out. Don't blow with your mouth — your breath carries moisture. And never use water, spit, or alcohol inside the port.

Q: I cleaned it and tried new cables and it still won't charge. Now what?

You've ruled out the cheap, easy causes, which is real progress. What's left is deeper — the port, the battery, or the phone's board. Stop buying parts and have someone take a look; a port or battery repair is often far cheaper than a new phone.

Q: Could it be the battery instead of the port?

It can. If the port is clean and every cable and charger checks out, a worn battery may be the cause — charging slowly, draining fast, or shutting off early. Many phones show battery health in their settings, and a battery is often replaceable.

★ Still stumped? That's what I'm here for

A phone that won't charge is one of my most common — and most satisfying — calls. Call or text (330) 200-8042 and we'll get to the bottom of it together, without you buying anything you don't need.

You don't have to do this alone

You just have to remember that a friendly, patient person is one call away.

I hope this guide made getting your phone charging again feel a little less daunting and a lot more doable. Keep it in a drawer with your other home papers, come back to a page whenever you need it, and don't worry about memorizing anything.

When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your home, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for the parts that don't need me on-site I can often help right on your screen for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day, come-back-free guarantee. I don't do licensed electrical, gas, or appliance-repair work myself — for that I'll help you line up a trustworthy local pro.

★ Bill's Home Tech — real help, close to home

Call or text me at (330) 200-8042, or visit BillsHomeTech.com. Serving Atwater and all of Portage County. 30+ years of patient, plain-English tech help — and if you're ever not 100% happy with a visit, I'll make it right or refund it. That's a promise. — Bill

Cleaning a Charging Port Safely

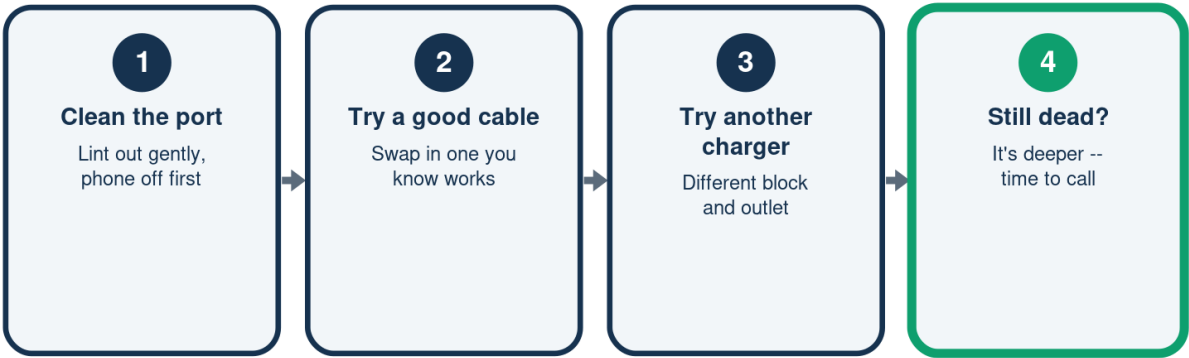
Gentle and dry on the left -- never on the right

	Do this	Never do this
Tool	Wood/plastic pick	Metal pin or needle
Air	Short dry burst	Water, spit, liquid
Power	Phone off first	Clean while it's on
Touch	Light and gentle	Forcing or digging

If it won't lift out easily, stop -- don't force it.

Test in Order, One at a Time

Change one thing, then try charging again



Whatever makes it charge again is your answer.

What Each Test Tells You

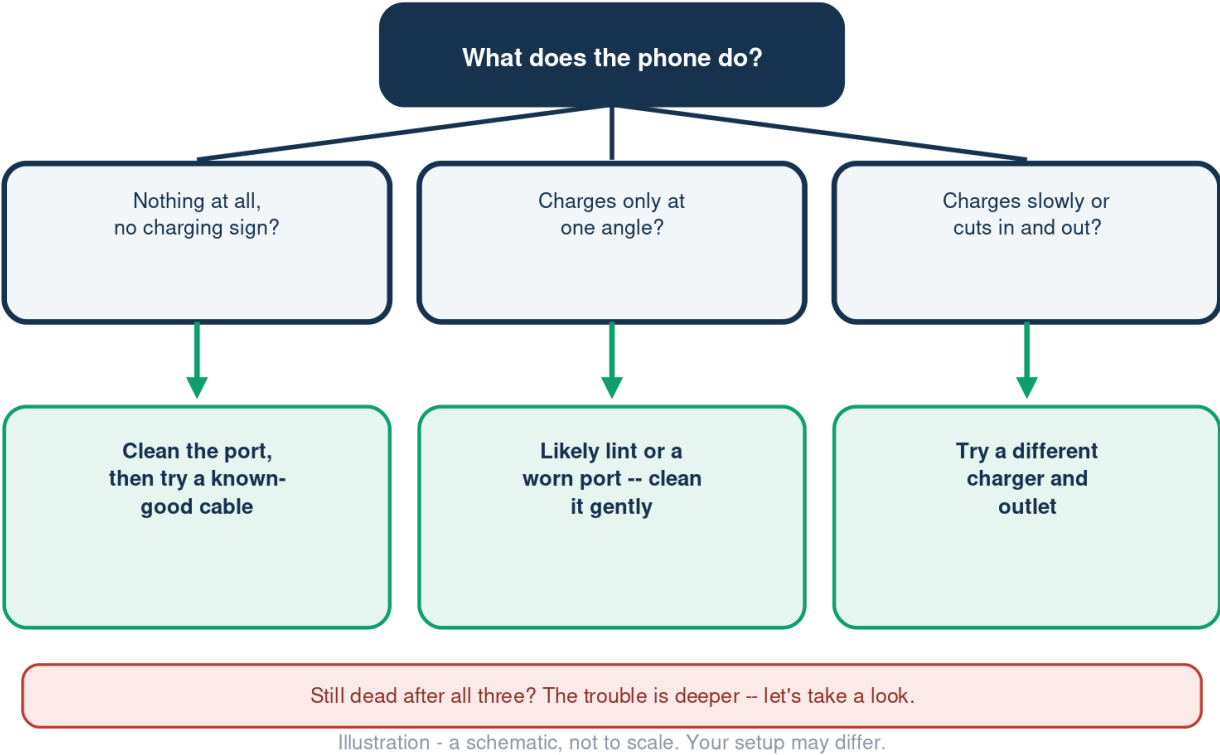
The step that fixes it names the culprit

	The fix	So the problem was
Cleaning helped	Lint in the port	
New cable helped	A worn-out cable	
New charger helped	Charger or outlet	
Nothing helped	Deeper -- have a look	

Change one thing at a time so the answer is clear.

Why Won't It Charge?

Plug it in and see what happens





Need a Real Person?

You do not have to remember all of it.
You just have to remember you can call.
Friendly, in-home tech help -- I come to you.

BILL'S PROMISE

If you are not 100% happy with a visit, I will
make it right -- or refund it. No awkwardness,
no fine print. That is how I would want to be treated.

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— Bill

Prefer help without a visit?

Bill can screen-share and fix many things remotely — a flat \$49, free for Support Plan members.



A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill.

I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that comes from using these guides. Thanks for reading, and stay safe out there.

— *Bill*



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