

# How To Get

## THE MOST OUT OF

# AMAZON

SAVING TIME, MONEY, AND STRESS ON THE  
WORLD'S LARGEST MARKETPLACE



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## Author Foreword

*This guide was originally written in 2019, and has since been updated for 2021.*

*I first published it with screenshots and images from Amazon.com – showing products and reviews. Unfortunately, Amazon weren't too happy with me! We're not allowed to share images of their site in-case it changes in the future.*

*As a compromise, I've rewritten the reviews and described each feature. I believe this shouldn't take away from all the tips and tricks you can learn in the following pages.*

*Thank you for taking the time to check out this guide. Happy reading.*

## Introduction

**How much money and time have you spent on Amazon in the last year?**

**Are you sure you're getting the most out of it?**

Amazon is the world's biggest online marketplace. And it's getting bigger. While on the one hand it's easy to use, there's also a lot to it. As its popularity has soared so has the amount of fake reviews supporting bad products, as well as opportunities for great deals and offers to be taken advantage of.

**As someone who has spent hundreds of hours researching on Amazon, I've discovered a ton of ways to get the most out of it as a regular customer.**

In this guide, I'll show you:

- *How to get money back as a Prime member*
- *How to spot fake reviews, and find those you can trust*
- *How to dive deeper into what reviewers are saying*
- *Where to find the best deals and savings*
- *And many more tips to get the most out of Amazon.*

My goal with this guide is to show you how to save time, money, and stress by better understanding Amazon's products and marketplace.

**Who am I?**

My name's Craig, I'm the co-creator and main writer of a humble appliance-based blog: ApplianceAnalysts. Our goal is to build a hugely helpful resource on all things home and appliance based.

I've personally spent hundreds – maybe even thousands – of hours researching and reviewing products listed on Amazon. Over time I've started to notice a bunch of commonalities between great products, bad ones, and what to look for on a product page. Not to mention a ton of tips and tricks on how to make the most out of Amazon.

*Ready to learn how to find deals and save money? Then let's dive in!*

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## Understanding Amazon

### Why #1 Best Seller May Not Mean What You Think It Does

As a shopper, one of the most attractive things I can see is a #1 Best Seller tag.

If it's not only being reviewed well, but it's also the top selling product in its category? Jackpot. That got to be a great option.

... Right?

**Yes. That's right. But check the category.**

One example that caught me was a pedestal fan that was a #1 Best Seller. But the category? Wall-mounted fans! That's because of the different models. The pedestal fan is on the same page as a highly popular wall-mounted fan, which had earned the #1 Best Seller tag for it's own category. But this now applied to all the products on that page.

**In short: Yes, you can trust the Best Seller tag. Just make sure it's for the right category!**

### How Reliable is Amazon's Choice?

While on Amazon, you may have seen the 'Amazon's Choice' tag. It looks quite similar to the #1 Best Seller tag, only in grey.

Amazon state it as recommending *"highly rated, well-priced products available to ship immediately"*.

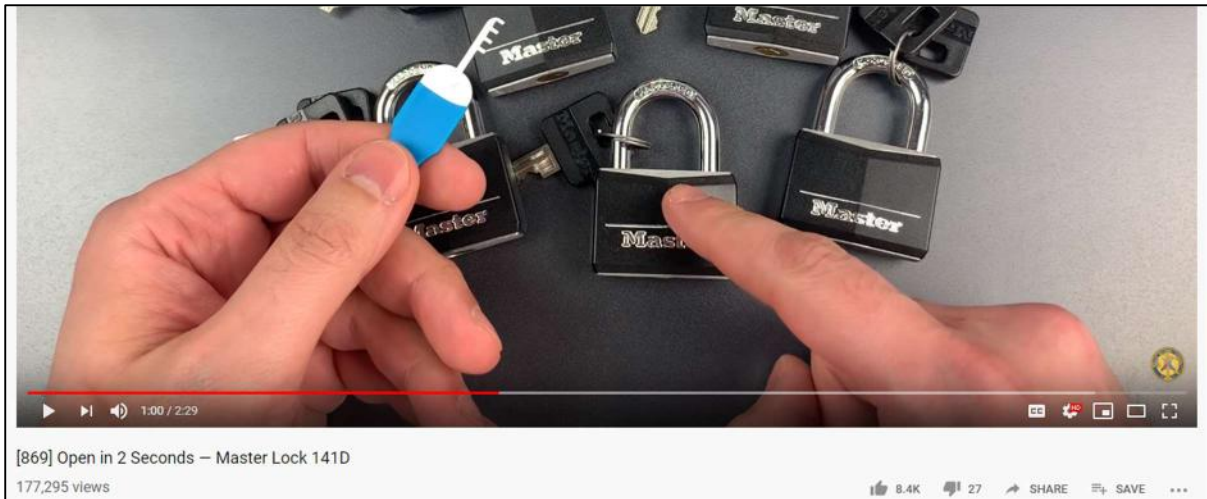
While we know that ratings aren't always true, and a high priority is likely given to Prime items, this tag is fairly reliable. Sort of.

One issue is the authority the tag provides – while being based on an algorithm. I'm not sure if anyone at Amazon actually reviews the products they're recommending. Some just... aren't great. Many are likely only propped up by fake reviews at first, and are now being sold en masse.

Take Amazon's Choice for padlocks' the Master Lock 141D.

It looks good. Cheap price, plenty of high ratings... what could go wrong?

Funny you should ask... try typing this video into YouTube:



In short – there’s a very simple tool you can use to open padlocks. It’s a simple ghost key (pictured above) that any good lock manufacturer has designed against. **Except this one hasn’t... and it’s Amazon’s Choice.**

**The bottom line: Amazon’s Choice is a quick indicator of good reviews, price, and availability... but always take the time to look into the product further.**

### Using Amazon Protection Plans

One of my biggest gripes with many product manufacturers is that many only provide a 1-year warranty. Even on appliances which cost over \$500, I still find this to be the standard case.

*For most, a simple 1 year just isn’t enough peace of mind. We want to be covered for multiple.*

In that case, one readily-available option is taking a ‘Protection Plan’ for an extra 2-3 years of complete coverage. These are offered as simple options next to the ‘Add to Cart’ button for many products.

### *Are they worth it?*

To answer that question, we need to consider two things;

#### **1: How reliable are these protection plans?**

The protection plans are mostly provided by a company called SquareTrade, or sometimes by another company called ASURION. These are both specialist insurer companies, to which these kind of plans are their sole business.

After doing a fair amount of research on each, I’ve found them both to be rated highly for both reliability and level of coverage.

In fact, it honestly seems like they provide better protection than most manufacturers! Their plans cover everything from parts to repair costs, and their customer service has an excellent reputation.

## 2: How much do they cost?

The costs of a plan vary with the cost (and type) of product. However, there's a quick rule of thumb we can use to ask ourselves if it's worth it: find the percentage cost of the plan.

*For example, take an example 3-year plan (\$8), and divide it by the total cost (\$74) to get 0.108. Multiply that by 100 and we can see the 3-year plan costs 10.8% of the total price. We can then ask: **“Do I think there is an 11% chance I will need this plan in the next 3 years?”** If so? Buy it! If not, no problem.*

## Where to Find The Best Deals

Whenever you're shopping on Amazon, it's a good idea to have a quick scout for some extra-nice deals. As one of the world's most popular online marketplace's, there's always hundreds of deals and offers on at any one time. Here's how to find them.

*Note: When shopping for deals, I recommend only doing so when you've got an open mind as to what you're looking to buy. Frantically searching for the perfect coupon for the one product you're interested in is a waste of time. But if your heart's not set on just one product – there's some unbelievable deals to be found every day.*

### *Today's Deals*

To make it easy, Amazon have centered all of their deals and offers into one location. Just click 'Today's Deals' in the links just below the search bar.

This will take you to the main deals page, with near-endless offers on all products. Make sure to take the most advantage using the filters on the left-hand side – where you can sort by category, price, and even discounts!

*Just for fun, try putting in 4-star or higher ratings, 70% and above discounts, and your appropriate price range. Voila, some irresistibly great offers*

### *Coupons*

Who doesn't love a good coupon? Companies often offer great discounts on their products if you just find the right coupon. Doing so is simple.

*Just go to [amazon.com/coupons](https://www.amazon.com/coupons)*

Again – make sure to filter down by category for the type of product you're interested in.

## Reviews

The greatest thing about online shopping is being able to see product reviews. When we can't handle a product ourselves, knowing what other people think is a huge vote of confidence when you're considering a purchase.

However, unfortunately, there's some companies out there that have taken to 'buying' fake reviews. Simply put, these are paid-for advocations of a product made to look like satisfied customers.

*Note that this isn't just on Amazon. It's a price we pay for everything being online nowadays. While most companies do what they can to prevent fake reviews, there's almost no way to stop them all. That's why it's important to ask...*

### What Are the Signs of a Fake Review?

#### *5-Star Ratings (or 1-Star)*

There's not much point paying for a review if you're only going to give an average rating. A fake review will *almost\** always be a 5-star endorsement or a 1-star 'sabotage' of their competitors.

*Sometimes they will put the odd 4 or 3 star review on a fake account to make it look more real.*

#### *Dates Clumped Together*

The way fake reviews work is they're purchased in packs. Someone 'buys' them, then the review company (read: con-artists) will log in to lots of fake accounts and submit reviews. This all happens around the same time.

If all the 5-star reviews are over the course of a few days, then the rest are spaced out normally – that's a huge 'fake' indicator. *(This can be hard to spot since Amazon doesn't first show reviews by date, but by their own algorithm. You can sort by date at the top of the reviews.)*

#### *Verified Purchase... or is it?*

If I was writing this guide a few years ago, I'd say that you could trust the verified purchase sign. Unfortunately, when you think about the thousands (or millions) of dollars that companies use to market their products, what harm is purchasing 50-100 of your own products for fake reviews? When getting that average review above 4-stars could 5-10x your sales – many companies have no hesitation in doing so.

*Nowadays, verified purchase is only a minor signal of authenticity. It could likely be a reimbursed purchase.*



### *Customer Images – can they be faked?*

Yes, they can. If the image is of a product in or fresh out of the box, that's a very easy fake. Try to look for images that show the product actually in use – especially if the reviewer is highlighting a particular issue or like about it.

### *Check the Reviewer Profile*

This is the real way to expose fake reviewers. It makes things so obvious! If they have low 'votes' but high reviews, that's a bad sign. Equally so if they aren't following anyone. If all the account has done is give reviews, it's likely a fake. **Especially** if they follow the rules above.

### What Reviews Can You Trust?

In contrast to fake reviews, there's a few signs of authenticity we can spot in a real reviewer. Look for things like:

- 1. More helpful votes than reviews on their profile.** Active participation gains a fake account nothing.
- 2. Spaced out review dates.** Their purchases are spaced out and over time. That's not to say someone can't review 2-3 products in one day – just that it shouldn't all be like that.
- 3. They follow other users.** Connecting with others is a real sign of a genuine account that participates regularly.

While looking at reviews for a sample, I found a suspicious 5 star review only saying "Great headphones good price" – 5/5 Stars [Shiva].

At first glance, this short 5-star review looks fake. But looking at Shiva's profile reveals more. Shiva has more helpful votes than reviews, and is following other users. Both great signs. Looking at her other reviews, the most recent are one 4-star and a 1-star, spaced 2 weeks apart. Good. She's even updating her top review after some issues with customer service. The story adds up. **Shiva is real!**

### *Watch Out for Model Styles/Types*

When there's multiple styles or kinds of one product, these are often collated into one page for convenience. One set of over-ear headphones, for example, has 5 different models.

Each of those options can be anything from a different color, to a completely different product! The issue is that the reviews for these different products apply to all of them.

Thankfully, there's an easy way to filter this down: **there is an 'All Formats' drop down at the start of the reviews. Use this to select only the reviews for the model you're looking at.**

### Check the Answered Questions

One section that is untouched by tricks is the **Answered Questions** section. These are questions submitted by potential buyers, and answered by users. These don't affect the products ranking, so there's no fake reviews or answers being placed there (*as far as I know*).

***That doesn't mean you don't get some interesting questions and answers, though.***

*Here's a quote from one the most hilarious answers:*

**Question: On the temperature control dial which is coldest: Min or Max?**

**Answer: Don't even think I should answer this. I'll ask you what do you think?????? Seriously? Max is better than min. Don't you think???? When you're talking about cooling something. Do you want your wine minimally cold or MAXIMUMLY Cold. Your wife could've answered this.. magnum or normal. Guessing she wants a MAGNUM!  
8=====>**

By [Redacted], July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

*He's got some really strong opinions on temperature gauges there...*

### What Being Offered a Free Product to Review Looks Like

As appliance bloggers, we get a lot of e-mails from companies trying to get favorable reviews.

Hello, Applianceanalysts team,

This is April, a seller from [REDACTED]. Our company is dedicated to developing and selling humidifiers and air purifiers.

I came across your [website](#). We found that you test various products for customers. It's so valuable and I really appreciate it. Are you interested in cooperating with us and testing our humidifiers? As the weather recently is really hot and dry, I believe that your fans will like them.

We have two products: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B07RYRD49K> <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B07P5KQ7SM>  
If you like, you can also compare the two humidifiers in your video. Feel free to let me know your requirements.

Looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Kind regards,  
April

*Although April didn't say it outright, they're clearly hoping for favorable reviews by sending out free products to anyone with a following.*

**This is why we never accept free products like these.** Our integrity to our readers would be ruined if we took "freebies" in return for glowing ratings. I'd be no better than normal fake reviews. I just wanted to make you aware of how prevalent it is.

### Why Low Reviews May Not Mean a Bad Product

People are tuned into looking at ratings and reviews these days, that many of us will disregard anything that's below 4.5-star rated.

However, as we've discovered – reviews aren't entirely reliable.

## High-Cost Items

Expensive items – especially appliances – tend to have less favourable reviews than cheaper ones. This is just a theory, but typically the more money that is involved, the more likely someone is to complain.

*And rightly so!*

If you've spent over \$500-\$1,000 on a product, you're expecting that it works as it should! Problems with expensive products are more frustrating, and are more likely to drive someone to write a negative review.

*On the other hand, a positive experience has no better chance of encouraging a review.* As with most products – happy customers are typically not needing to come back to the product page.

There are also less fake 5-star reviews on big-ticket items, since it costs so much for the companies to buy them out.

## Low Reviews Can Be Skewed by Date.

In rare cases, some products are released with a bit of a hitch.

Maybe there are some early bugs in the software, or parts that aren't matched exactly, or even if they didn't have enough stock at release.

Looking at an example high-end product, the top two reviews are over 3 years old, whereas the positive reviews are much more recent. There may have been a change in the product or a bad batch, which has since been fixed. But these negative reviews still apply to the overall rating.

## Tips for Evaluating a Product

After researching so many products online, I've come up with a check list of aspects to always investigate when considering if a product is worth its price tag. Let's go through them.

*First, let's start with the aspects covered in the 'Product Information' section. This is found on any product page on Amazon. It's a quick standardized list of the basic details about the product.*

## Warranty

A product's warranty is one of the first things you should check. The cover a manufacturer provides their customer gives us indicators about a) the quality of the product, b) the respect the company has for its customers, and c) the confidence they have in their own product.

It's an often-overlooked aspect, but warranty is a huge deal.

For example, one of the best market leaders in home fans are Vornado. Not only do they have their own fan technology, but their warranties are unbelievable.

*Their warrant their normal range of fans for a full 5 years, and their 'Energy Smart' range is covered by **10-year warranties**.*

10 years!! That speaks volumes about the product and the company. Compare that to a standard mass-produced fan with a 1-year warranty? There's no question which you'd rather have.

Warranties are typically either given on the page, linked to as a PDF (as in the above image), or not listed. In which case they say 'contact the manufacturer' (which almost always means a 1-year warranty, they just don't want to show it).

### **Date Listed**

Present on every product, this is the date the product first appeared on Amazon. It gives you a good idea of how modern a product is, and whether or not you might be looking at an outdated model.

### **Customer Reviews**

Here we can see a bit more detail about the average reviews. Instead of just an X/5 rating, we can see X.X/5. So you can see if the product has just missed out on a 4<sup>th</sup> star (i.e. average of 3.7) or vice versa.

### **Technical Specification**

These are links to documents which give us more details on the product. If it's a major appliance, have a quick look through the spec sheet to confirm dimensions, and a glance through the user manual gives a good idea on how tricky the installation may be.

### *When You've Not Heard of the Company*

Did you know each company has their own profile page on Amazon?

Clicking on the 'Company' link underneath the title will take you to that seller's Amazon page. Not a gamechanger for well-known companies, but this can be incredibly useful for small companies.

Sometimes you'll find they only sell one product, or only a few others (which have poor ratings). Couple this with seemingly fake reviews, and you may have found a scam product.

### *Check 'Reviews That Mention'*

With some products having *thousands* of reviews, a new tool is the '**Reviews That Mention**' filter. Find it right above the reviews for most popular products.

You can immediately see the most common points of any product with a large number of reviews. For this one, the tags are all looking positive – and we can scan for anything we're looking for (i.e. if you're looking for a product that is 'quiet' or 'easy to install' – try and find one with tags for these).

You can also click on any of the tags to filter only for reviews that mention those aspects.

### *Review Details*

Amazon also collect data on more than just the average review. The 'Reviews That Feature' (typically to the left of the reviews) give you a deeper insight into what customers are saying.

These can be especially important if you're looking for a particular feature (i.e. easy to use). Further, the bar chart of reviews by stars can give us another indicator for the authenticity of reviews. If the ratings are heavily 5-star or 1-star only, that's a bit suspicious. Having a bit of a spread amongst the different ratings is a sign of more real reviews.

## Other Tips

### Review Programs

#### *FakeSpot / ReviewMeta*

With so many fake reviews out there, some clever software developers have tried to act against them. The two in particular are called 'FakeSpot' and 'ReviewMeta'.

Basically, these are tools made to analyse the comments on a product for authenticity. It's mostly looking at similar phrases used, bad English language, and overly sales-y type.

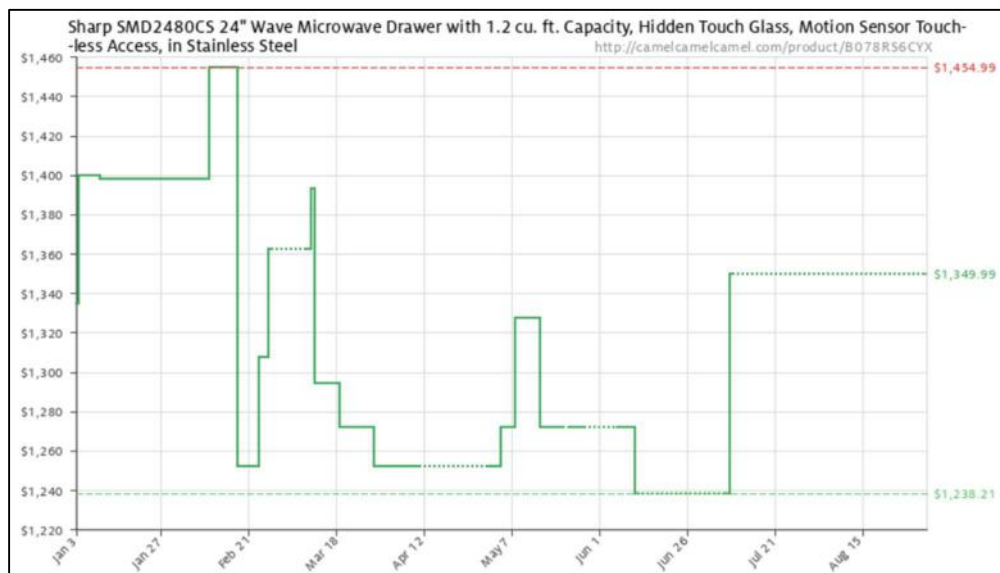
They're not the most accurate tools in the world. But they can be interesting to look at. FakeSpot have even developed a plugin for Google Chrome / FireFox / Safari that shows the 'grade' of each product in its image. This gives you a quick glance at what their algorithm thinks about the reviews of a product.

Have a go using FakeSpot at FakeSpot.com – just remember that the tool isn't perfect. (In fact, the two tools I've mentioned sometimes disagree with one another!)

#### *Track Prices using CamelCamelCamel*

Another difference with online shopping is that prices are always changing. With thousands and thousands of products, it's hard to keep track.

One amazing tool that I always rely on is a website called 'CamelCamelCamel'. *No, I have zero idea why they called it that either!*



For high ticket items like this (ridiculously) expensive microwave, you'll see the price history since it was included on Amazon. This is great to know whether you're looking at a good deal, or a jacked-up price due it being holiday season.

The URL is just [www.camelcamelcamel.com](http://www.camelcamelcamel.com)

## Amazon Programs

### *Amazon Smile*

Since this guide is 'How to Get the Most Out of Amazon' – it's mostly about how to save money, or find the best products. But sometimes there's something that's even more important.

If you don't know about AmazonSmile – you should! It is a simple way to donate some of what you spend to charity. Without costing yourself a penny.

*Just by signing up and shopping via 'smile.amazon.com' instead of 'amazon.com' – they will donate 0.5% of the money you spend to charity. And you choose the charity. While the 0.5% may not sound like much, it does add up over time. Especially for those of us who use Amazon a little more than we'd like to admit!*

Sign up here: <https://smile.amazon.com/>

*You won't regret the 5 minutes it takes.*

### *Enjoy a Student Membership*

Are you a student, or have a student in your family? Any sign-up with a .edu e-mail (or equivalent) automatically qualified for Prime Student. Which comes with a fantastic 50% discount... that lasts for up to 4 years! Amazon don't have a way to find out when you graduate, so if you sign up late in your degree – you can still use the membership (provided you keep access to your student e-mail).

### *Get Money Back as Prime Member*

Are you a prime member? Something that many members miss is that you can make money back on your prime membership.

Since Amazon have promised you next-day delivery, they will actually **give you money back** if you let them take longer than the prime-speed.

*If you're ever ordering something that you don't need rushed to you, just select the 'Slower' delivery option at checkout and save a few dollars on your purchase. Get into the habit of ordering things before you need them, and these savings can really start adding up!*

### *Use Prime Family / Amazon Household*

'Amazon Household' is a way to share all the benefits of Prime with your household. All you need is one membership and to be living at the same address. You can get free shipping, prime video, and Amazon photos.

**Another great category is Prime Family.**

This also lets you enjoy discounts on baby subscriptions (20% off diapers / baby food) and set it so you can 'Approve' any purchases made by the kids!

*Just Google 'Amazon Household' and/or 'Prime Family'*

### *Fake Cancel Audible*

Something which is easy to do is to "Fake-Cancel" your Audible memberships.

It's well-known that companies will often offer customers attempting to leave a much better deal. **When it comes to Amazon, this process is automated.**

All you need to do is log in to your account and begin to cancel your Audible membership. Voila! Deals automatically offered to give you either:

1. A free audiobook credit.
2. Reducing payment and credits to every other month.
3. A free \$20 bonus.

These deals are fantastic value, and there's absolutely no hidden catch. I'm also fairly sure you can repeat this more than once in the future.

### Delivery Tricks

#### *Guaranteed Refunds*

It's something that many miss, but Amazon are serious when they give you a guaranteed delivery date.

If you ever have a late delivery, or are ordering a high-cost item – it's worth taking out the guaranteed delivery option. It can be a very nice bag of change you get back, and eases some of the frustration if anything runs late!

### Benefits of the Holiday Season

There's two little-known but amazing benefits Amazon offer towards the end of the year.

**First is a hugely extended return date.** Because of so many Christmas shoppers, Amazon typically extend the return date on items bought from November onwards until January 31<sup>st</sup>! While a good ploy to get people to shop for Christmas early, it's also a great way to get more peace of mind on your purchases.

**Second, delivery is often free (without a minimum spend) during the holiday season.** Amazon really try to corner the market in the winter months, and often offer free delivery on all purchases between November to January. This isn't a guarantee, but do bear it in mind.



## Conclusion

Although Amazon's designed to be a simple click-and-buy marketplace, there's a lot more to it than meets the eye.

With so many of us purchasing things from it every month – I wanted to share what I learned in my hundreds, if not thousands of hours working with the marketplace.

I hope this guide has helped give you some tips on how to get the most out of it. If by writing this I can at least help one person, then it's been worth it.

If you enjoyed the read, or have any suggestions, I'd love to hear from you! Please get in touch via my e-mail below.

**Thanks for reading. Have a great day.**

*Craig Anderson*

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