

# How To Market Your Business Online For Free

A simple starter guide for small business owners



Chidinma Nnamani | [NETACLES.COM](https://NETACLES.COM)

# Introduction

Before we get started on the ways you can market your business online, let's answer a really simple question:

## **What does it mean for your business to have an online presence?**

If you run an offline business, then it's likely you already advertise your business online in one or two ways.

For example, you may have advertised your business via your Facebook posts, personal chats, and you may even be actively sourcing for and interacting with customers via social media or email.

But does that mean your business is online?

The answer is **no**.

When we talk about your business being online, we mean the possibility for random searchers, or people who heard about your business from someone, to use a search engine (such as Google) to find your business.

For example, do you have a business name? If I googled your business, what would I find?

Do you have an active website, social media profiles, and is your business listed in online directories? These seemingly simple things are the basic ingredients of a solid online presence.

Let's look at a real-life example of a business doing it right. Let's find a business that has a solid online presence.

First, I started a Google search for bakeries in Lagos and I found Dreamtreats Cake.

Next, I searched for the company and here's the result I got from Google.

The image shows a Google search for "Dreamtreats cake lagos". The search results on the left include:

- A search bar with the query "Dreamtreats cake lagos" and a red arrow pointing to it.
- Navigation tabs: All, Images, Maps, Videos, News, More, Settings.
- Results for "Buy Cakes online in Lagos - Cakes@aClick by Dreamtreats | Cake ...", "Contact Us - Dreamtreats | Cake", "DREAMTREATS - Scrumptious Cakes, Exquisite Designs - Home ...", "Dreamtreats - Online Cake Shop Website Development | CKDigital", and "Dreamtreats Cakes Lekki Lagos State, Nigeria - finelib.com".
- Red boxes and arrows highlight "Website" (pointing to the first result), "Facebook page" (pointing to the Facebook result), and "Other listings" (pointing to the CKDigital and finelib.com results).

The business listing snippet on the right for "Dreamtreats Cake" includes:

- A red box labeled "Google My Business Listing" pointing to the listing header.
- Photos of cakes and the storefront, with "See photos" and "See outside" buttons.
- Business name: "Dreamtreats Cake" with a star rating.
- Rating: "5.0 ★★★★★ 3 Google reviews".
- Buttons for "Website" and "Directions".
- Address: "12 Olusesi St, Lekki Peninsula II, Lagos".
- Hours: "Closed now".
- Phone: "0802 846 7629".
- A red box labeled "Business info" pointing to the address, hours, and phone information.
- Buttons for "Suggest an edit", "Know this place? Answer quick questions", "Reviews from the web" (4.5/5 Facebook - 26 votes), "Send to your phone", "Reviews" (3 Google reviews), "Write a review", and "Add a photo".

Not only does this company have a website (the first listing), they also have an active Facebook page and the business is listed with Google, which is why you see the rich snippet to the right.

At a glance, I have all the information I need to contact and do business with Dreamtreats Cake right there on the first page of Google search result.

That is what a solid online presence means: **The ability for people to find your business on the internet and do business with you online.**

If all you do is share random posts on Facebook under your personal profile and blast people in chat groups with spammy messages, then you're not using the internet for strategic business growth.

Your business needs a solid online marketing strategy that is not only targeted at advertising your business and getting sales but also **building a memorable brand.**

To recap, here are the three ingredients of a solid web presence:

1. Listings in important online directories
2. Active social media profiles
3. Functional business website

In the next topic, we'll look at one of the best free ways to put your business in front of your customers.

# Get Started with Online Business Listings

Now that we're clear about what it means for your business to have an online presence, let's look at one of the most important methods of advertising your business online for free:

## **Local business listings.**

One of the definitions of local business listings I love is the one by [Digital Doughnut](#):

*“Local business listings are online portfolios that contain information about your business, such as your name, address, phone number, hours (opening and closing times), and other data. Most platforms that provide this information are free to use, but users must manually add their information or claim their business.”*

Establishments that provide these services online are also called **online directories**.

In every country, there are usually establishments that provide these services. But there are also internationally relevant ones such as Google My Business and Yelp!.

When I first started out as a freelancer, I listed my proofreading and editing services on *Vconnect*, a national business directory.

That simple listing landed me a number of clients, some of whom I still work with till date.

Such is the power of advertising your business with online directories.

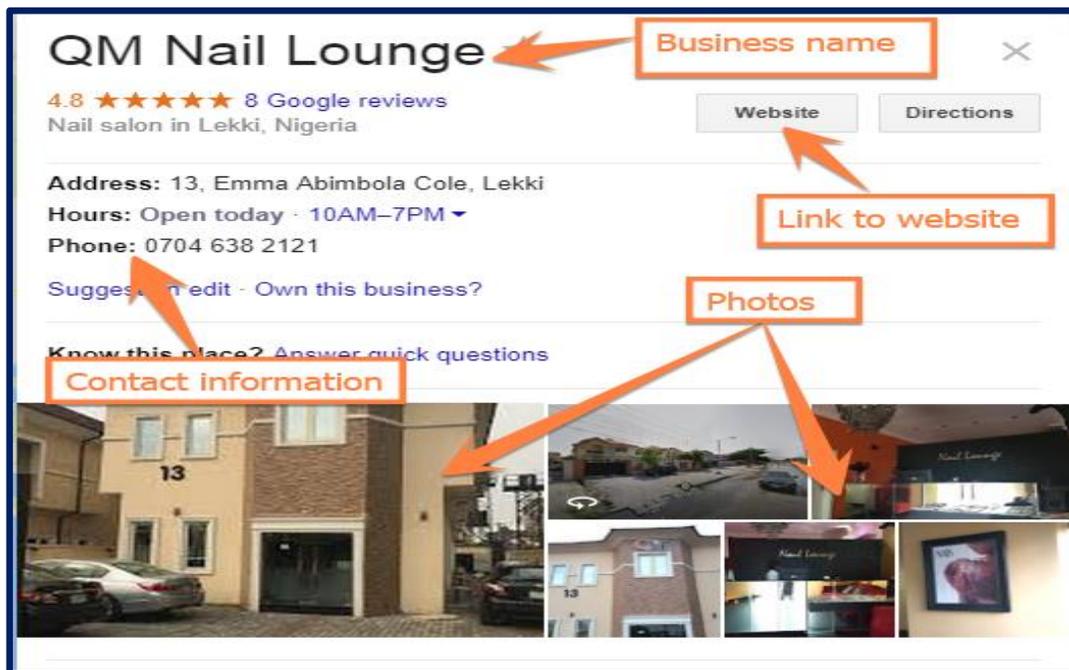
If you haven't already, I recommend listing your business in the following two major places:

## 1. Google My Business

The most important listing for **any business with a physical address** is Google My Business.

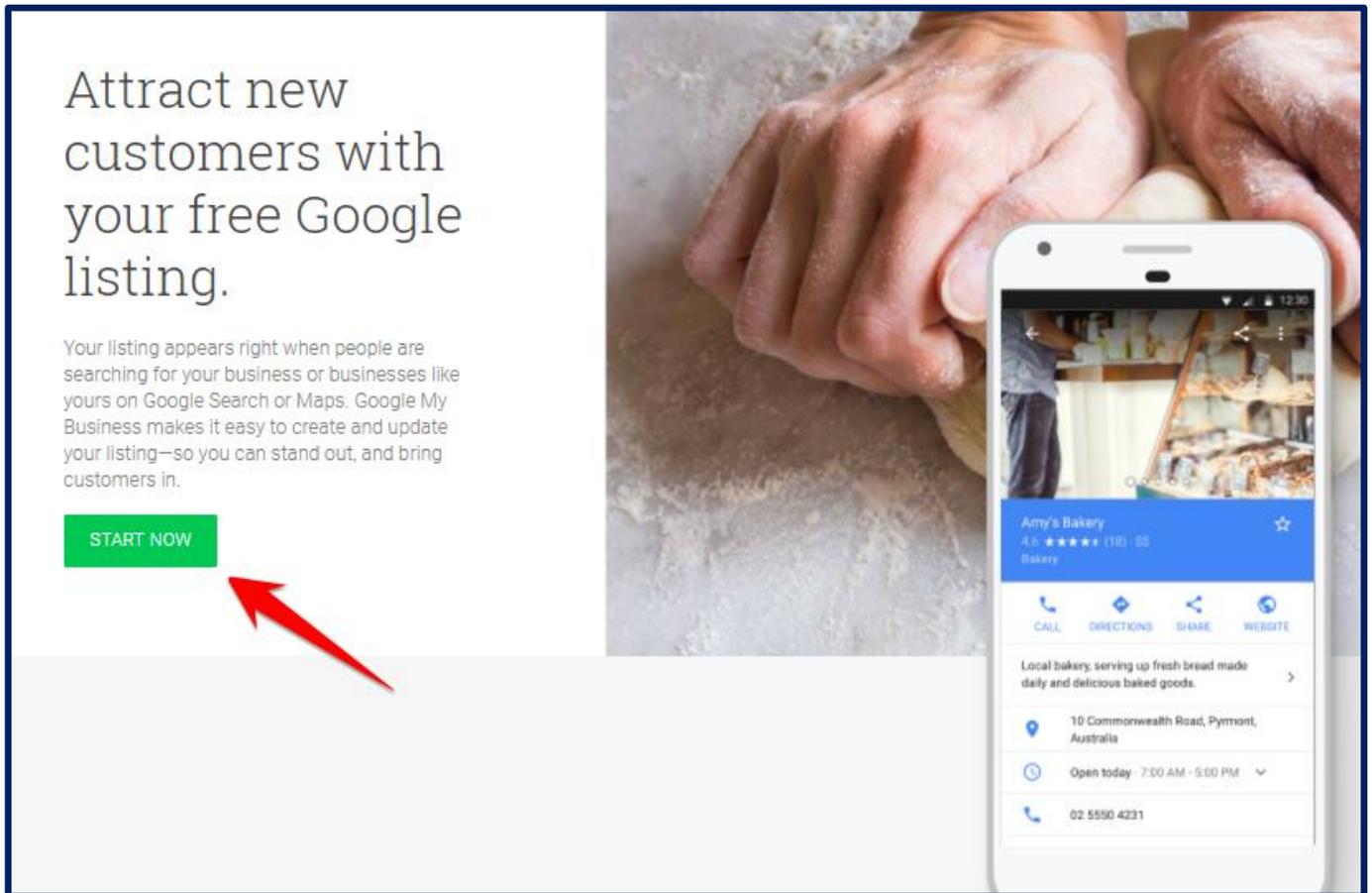
Listing your business with Google allows it to show up in search results as a rich snippet like the one we saw with Dreamtreats cake.

You can also include links to your website and social media profiles. You can view it as a sort of **free electronic business card with a lot of detailed information**.



## How to List Your Business with Google

Head over to the Google My Business homepage. You can search for it via google search or simply click [here](#).



Attract new customers with your free Google listing.

Your listing appears right when people are searching for your business or businesses like yours on Google Search or Maps. Google My Business makes it easy to create and update your listing—so you can stand out, and bring customers in.

[START NOW](#)

The image shows a smartphone displaying a Google My Business listing for 'Amy's Bakery'. The listing includes a photo of a bakery interior, a 4.5-star rating, address (10 Commonwealth Road, Pymont, Australia), and phone number (02 5550 4231). A red arrow points to the 'START NOW' button on the left side of the page.

The headline already summarizes what Google My Business is all about: “attract new customers with your free Google listing.”

Click on the **Start Now** button to begin the process.

On the next page, you'll be asked to provide your business name, the country/region where your business is located, address, state and postal code.

Business name

Country / Region  
Nigeria

Street address

Suburb

City  
Enter the full city name

Postal code

State  
Please select

Once you provide these details, Google will try to locate your business on the map. You can adjust it to choose your exact business location.

This is important because you have to verify that your business is actually in this location.

Other details required are your main business phone number, the category of your business and your website URL (if you have a business website).

City  
Enter the full city name

Postal code

State  
Please select

Main business phone  
+1

Category  
Enter a category

Website  
Enter a URL

I deliver goods and services to my customers at their location – [Important information](#)

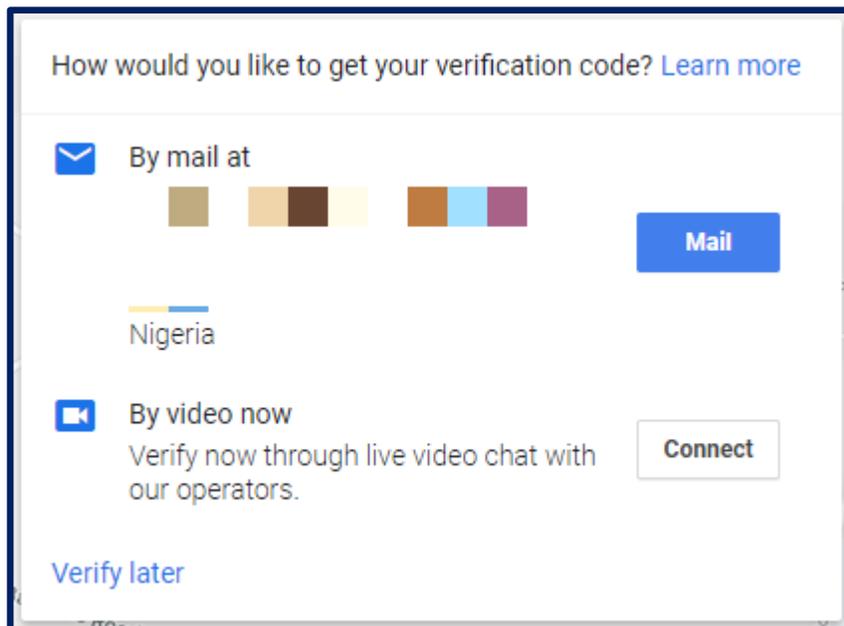
Yes  No

If you deliver services to your customers at their location (i.e. home delivery), select **“yes”** in the options beneath the question. If you don’t, leave it at **“no.”**

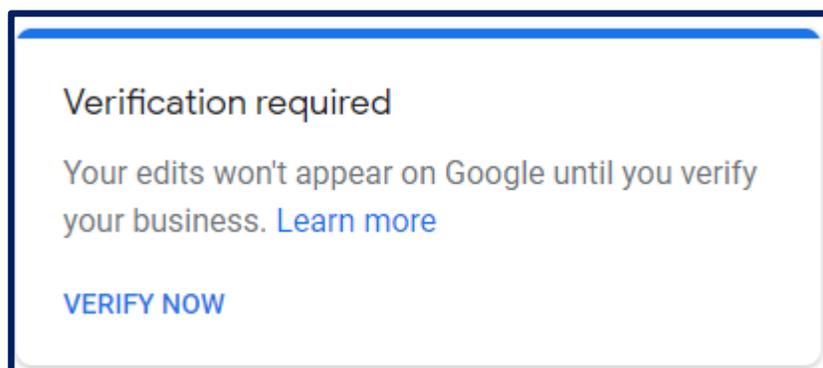
Once you have filled out the form and located your business on the map, you’ll be prompted to verify your business.

You can verify your business in either of two ways:

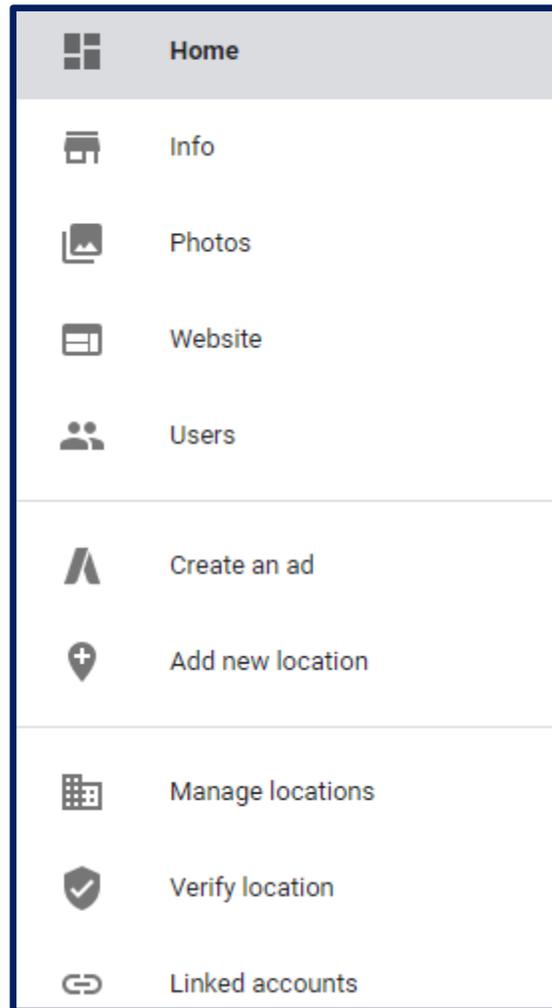
- 1. By mail** – Google will send a mail with your verification code to the business address you specified. You then have to enter this code online to verify your business location.
- 2. By video call** – You can initiate a live video chat with one of the operators. The operator will confirm the location of your business.



Note that if you do not verify your business, it won't show up in search results.



When you have verified your business, you can add additional business information such as photos, new location or edit the old information.



You can always tweak your business listing to boost your chances of reaching more customers.

If you need any help with the process, feel free to reach us [here](#).

Next, let's take a look at how to get your business listed in national/local directories.

## 2. National Business Directories

Listing your business in national/local directories, such as Vconnect and Finelib, will help your business show up in more places in search results. See how Elalan construction appears in two more spots in addition to their website and Google My Business listing.

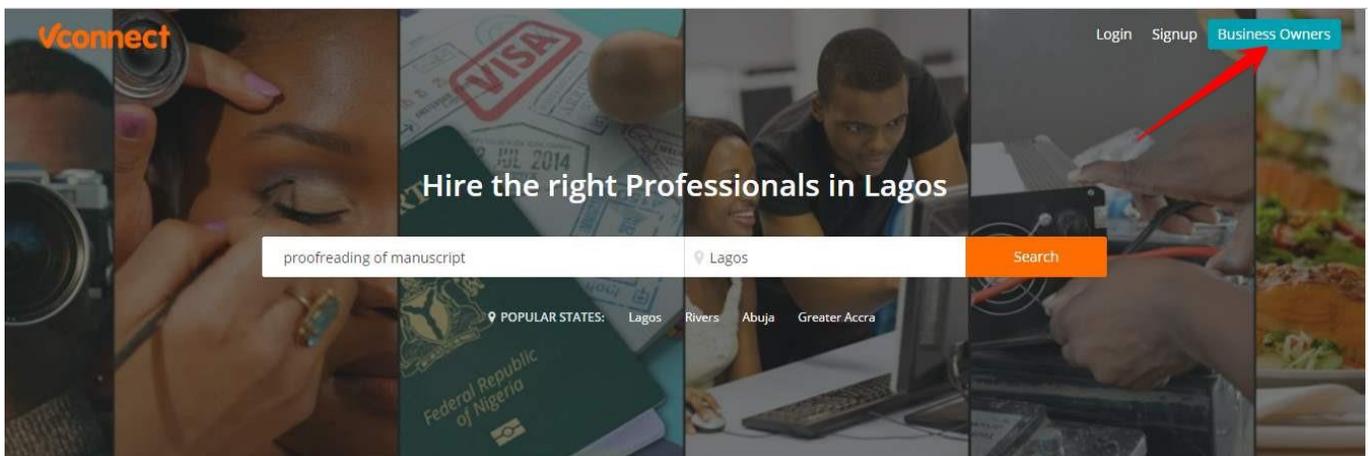
The image is a screenshot of a Google search for "elalan construction lagos". The search bar at the top left contains the text "elalan construction lagos" with a red arrow pointing to it. Below the search bar, the search results are displayed. The first result is "ELALAN Constructions - Home" with the URL "www.elalan.com/". A red arrow points to this result with a red box labeled "Website". The second result is "El Alan Construction Company @ 9, MacGregor Street, Lagos Island ...", with a URL "https://www.vconnect.com/el-alan-construction-company-lagos-island-lagos\_b513784". A red arrow points to this result with a red box labeled "Vconnect listing". The third result is "EL-ALAN Construction Company (Nigeria) Limited (EL-ALAN or the ...)", with a URL "https://www.finelib.com/listing/ELALAN-Construction-Company/19893/". A red arrow points to this result with a red box labeled "Finelib listing". On the right side of the search results, there is a "Google My Business listing" for "ELALAN Construction Compar". A red arrow points to this listing with a red box labeled "Google My Business listing". The listing includes a photo of a tall building, a 3.9-star rating from 23 Google reviews, and the address "9 Macgregor Rd, ikoyi, Lagos". Below the listing, there are sections for "Reviews" (23 Google reviews) and "People also search for" with several related business cards.

## How to List Your Business in National Directories

The process is similar to Google My Business Listing, except you don't need to locate your business on the map.

To get your business listed on Vconnect, simply visit [Vconnect.com](https://vconnect.com). The default page is set up for customers looking for business services.

To register your business, click on “**Business Owners**” at the top right corner.



This takes you to the page where you can register your business.



Provide your email address and business phone number and proceed from there.

On [Finelib](#), choose the city where your business is located and fill the form that follows.

To list your business, please select the right city your business or services are located in Nigeria - when at that page, you can then navigate to the right category were you will see "Add Your Business" on top of that page to start the submission process.

### Nigeria Cities Directory

<a href="#">Aba</a>	<a href="#">Abakiliki</a>
<a href="#">Abeokuta</a>	<a href="#">Abuja</a>
<a href="#">Ado-Ekiti</a>	<a href="#">Akure</a>
<a href="#">Asaba</a>	<a href="#">Awka</a>
<a href="#">Bauchi</a>	<a href="#">Benin City</a>
<a href="#">Birnin Kebbi</a>	<a href="#">Calabar</a>
<a href="#">Damaturu</a>	<a href="#">Dutse</a>
<a href="#">Enugu</a>	<a href="#">Gombe</a>
<a href="#">Gusau</a>	<a href="#">Ibadan</a>
<a href="#">Ilorin</a>	<a href="#">Jalingo</a>
<a href="#">Jos</a>	<a href="#">Kaduna</a>
<a href="#">Kano</a>	<a href="#">Katsina</a>

[Home](#) » [Sign Up](#)

### Sign Up

Fill up the form below to continue the business listing submission at [Finelib.com](#):

Username:	<input type="text"/>
Password:	<input type="password"/>
Re-enter Password:	<input type="password"/>
First Name:	<input type="text"/>
Last Name:	<input type="text"/>
E-mail:	<input type="text"/>
Phone:	<input type="text"/>

Always keep in mind that the aim of local listings is to **increase your online visibility** and the chances that prospective customers will find your business when they are searching for services you offer.

When filling out your business description, use terms that your prospective customers are likely to use. This is called **search engine optimization**.

For example, someone looking for a construction company may search for “construction companies in Port Harcourt.”

When writing your description, be sure to include that phrase, like this: “ABC Rails is a **construction company in Port Harcourt**.”

It is possible that your business may already be listed in some of these directories. In that case, all you need to do is **claim your business**. This usually requires providing your phone number or email address and you would get a call from a representative to verify that you own the business.

To recap, if your business has a physical address, then you should list it in two or more online directories. This helps potential customers find you when they search specifically for your business or for services you provide.

Be sure to include in your headings and descriptions the words and phrases that your customers are likely to use when performing these searches.

**Simple, right?**

## Take action!

Now that you understand the importance of online business listings and what they can do for your business, it's time to get to work.

Start by listing your business in the two major places discussed in this e-book.

But don't stop there.

If you wish to truly use the internet to generate a steady stream of customers/clients, then you need to go beyond basic listings. You need to adopt proven online marketing strategies that will catapult your business growth.

Sadly, this is the point where many business owners often get overwhelmed and choose to do nothing instead.

That's why I provide a **FREE** one-time **Consultation** to help you:

- ✓ understand the online marketing options available to you
- ✓ select the best strategies for marketing your own business, and
- ✓ choose the best single action to take immediately.

**BOOK YOUR FREE  
CONSULTATION NOW**

The consultation is **completely FREE** and requires no obligations on your part. Just a friendly chat about your business.

# Get content that engages, educates and converts your readers into paying customers.



Hi, I'm Chidinma.

I am a freelance writer/copywriter. I tell business stories and create content on digital marketing topics. I also write B2B content for food companies.

This e-book was created for my other website, **Netacles.com**, where I offer online marketing services to small business owners and managers in my location.

If you enjoyed this e-book and would like me to create similar content for you, then feel free to reach out.

Email: **chidinma@dinmawrites.com**

Website: **dinmawrites.com**

You can say hi on LinkedIn too.  
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