

CELT Reading Handbook

Following Chris Such's 'Primary Reading Simplified'

Chris Such's reading lesson structures are designed to build **automaticity, understanding, and deep thinking** in a coherent sequence. Each structure has a distinct purpose, but they work best as a balanced diet across the week. They are based on meta-analysis of strong data sets.

Fluency lessons – Purpose – To develop accuracy, prosody, and automaticity so pupils can read effortlessly.

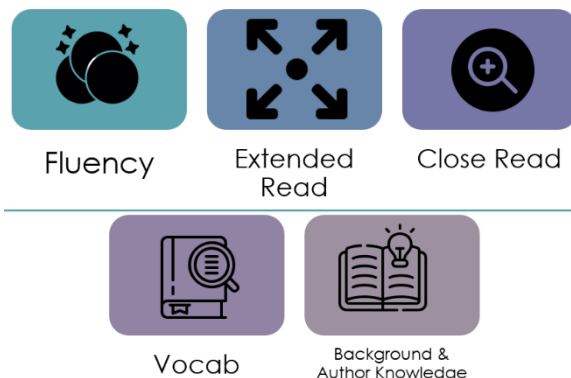
Extended Reads – Purpose – Build stamina, background knowledge, and overall comprehension of longer texts.

Close Read Lesson – Purpose – Deep, analytical understanding of a short, complex extract.

Chris Such advocates a **balanced reading diet**:

- **Fluency** → builds the engine (automatic reading).
- **Extended read** → builds stamina and knowledge.
- **Close read** → builds deep comprehension and analysis.

Reading Lesson Structures



Glossary of visuals and key terms:

Visual key		
Fluency	Extended Read	Close Read
Background & Author Knowledge	Vocab	Pace required

Strategy key	
Listen	Focus on the way I'm reading so you can repeat.
Again	Echo that sentence again. It wasn't quite right.
Choral	All say it together. That wasn't together; try again.
Echo	Repeat after me, in the same style.
MTYT	It's my turn, then you will repeat which will be your turn.

Timetables:

Depend on year group and ability. Order of days is irrelevant. But a typical week will include:

- Y2: 3 Fluency, 2 Extended Reads.
- LKS2: 2 fluency, 2 extended, 1 close.
- UKS2: – 1 fluency, 2 extended, 2 close.

For example:

Y2	Fluency	Extended	Fluency	Extended	Fluency
Y3/4	Fluency	Extended	Fluency	Extended	Close
Y5/6	fluency	extended	close	extended	Close

Fluency Lesson

Purpose: To develop accuracy, prosody, and automaticity so pupils can read effortlessly.

What it is: A short, highly structured reading session focussed on a short passage of text using echo and choral reading. The chosen text is carefully selected or designed to develop a specific aspect of fluency—such as automaticity, prosody, or accuracy—or, at times, to strengthen overall fluency across all areas. Within our curriculum, this text may be:

- a purposefully constructed piece linked to the class novel
- a well-chosen excerpt from the novel that supports fluent reading
- or a high-quality extract from another text or poem

Each session is tightly focused, enabling pupils to practise and refine fluent reading through repeated, supported reading.

Prep:

- Like RWI, children should be seated in Mixed Ability Pairs for Fluency lessons and called Partner A and Partner B.
- Partner A should secretly be the stronger reader.
- In fluency lessons, children share a text to enable shared attention.
- The text length will be approximately 150 -300 words in length.
- Decide where you will place emphasis on and how you will explain this.
- Check if there are any additional words you may need pre-teach or explain for your class.

Typical structure:

1. **Frame The Learning & Connect** – contextualise the text. If it is a complete text, i.e. poem, explain the text type and theme. If it is an extract, detail where the extract fits in the wider narrative. **(30 seconds)**

2. **Vocabulary** – sometimes, not always, no more than 4 words which would cause difficulty in reading may be pre-taught using the following vocabulary structure: **(3 mins max)**



- **Show** the word
- **Say** the word
- **MTYT** the word for pronunciation a few times.
- **Define** - Give the definition.
- **Explain** - explain the meaning in context. Make any connections or links.
- **Non** - Give non-examples.
- **Morphology** - Unpick the morphology if relevant.
- **Use** – ask the pupils to use the word in a sentence with a partner – choose some to share – address any misconceptions. Keep this tight — fluency is the priority.

Vocabulary	
Skeletal	
	
Definition	Connection/Properties
A way of describing something as looking or acting like a skeleton.	Skeleton
Example	Non-Example
The girl was so thin she was skeletal.	A place cannot be skeletal but a person, animal or idea can be.
Morphology - Latin	
Skelet + al (bones of the body + related to)	
Your turn	

3. **Teacher model (5-10 minutes)**

- The teacher reads the passage aloud first emphasising prosody skills (pace, phrasing, volume and expression).
- Teacher gives brief attention to tricky vocabulary or decoding points as they read.
- The teacher explains the explicit skills they are focussing on when reading.
- The teacher reads again with children following in the text. The teacher's book or a competent readers book is now under the visualizer for this read. Pupils use their reading rulers to follow. Teacher references line numbers where learners lose track. Teacher insists on everyone following.

4. **Echo or choral reading (5 mins)**

- Read again and this time pupils repeat a sentence/phrase at a time after the teacher (echo/repeated reading) or whole class chorally exactly as the teacher does it. The teacher monitors prosody skills and uses language cues to direct the children.

- After reading, unpick any parts of the text you focused on i.e. emphasis, paused, tricky words and discuss your reasons for these briefly. Provide feedback to the class.
- Repeat echo read if required or repeat chorally if required.

5. **Paired reading (10+ mins)**

- Identify a section of the text for pupils to rehearse – two or three sentences.
- Using pre-established mixed ability pairs:
- Partner A (secretly stronger reader) reads the identified passage.
- Partner B coaches using fluency checklist (see resources) Swap and repeat until they have each read 3 times.
- Next the pair practice reading chorally, working together to improve their fluency.
- After 5 minutes of rehearsal, select pairs to share their 'Performance' read of some pairs. Pupils should use reading rulers throughout. During the rehearsal, the adult circulates to support and encourage.

6. **Quick comprehension check (5 mins)**

- Discussion of the text and/or quick comprehension questions.
- Use fastest finger first to increase engagement and focus on the 5 Ws on the rugby post (who, what, why, when, where, how).
- A quick summary discussions or paired talk task can be used in response to questions or a statement to complete the lesson. i.e. 'Tell your partner who the main character is in the text.' or 'As a pair, summarise what this text was about.'

Key features:

- Short text – often a re-read or a specifically chosen extract.
- High repetition.
- Strong teacher modelling.
- Focus on reading aloud effectively.
- Low cognitive load on comprehension.

Outcome: Improved reading flow and confidence.

Q & A

How do I support pupils who might struggle with fluency reading lessons?

Some pupils may still be at the early stages of decoding and not yet ready to benefit from fluency reading, even with peer support. In these cases, ideally, they would still be receiving early reading instruction (most likely phonics) during whole class reading instruction time. This is what an inspection team would hope to see and is part of the CELT priority to ensure all learners leave primary as capable readers. Chris Such and other experts confirm that whole class reading instruction should be reserved for learners who have mastered decoding (through phonics, gestalt or other approaches as appropriate) and moved past the early reading stage.

However, to support those just rejoining whole class reading after early reading instruction, you can scaffold the paired reading and perform this as a teacher-led small group where the teacher reads a sentence aloud, then pupils repeat it together, ensuring they track the words.

For all other learners, adaptations may be made around insistence on following with a reading ruler or taking part in paired work. The priority is that pupils ready for fluency practise it, while those who are not receive focused support with decoding.

How do I stretch more fluent readers?

Fluency reading still benefits most pupils. Unless a pupil is exceptionally fluent (reading at a teacher level), it provides valuable practice in prosody—developing expression, rhythm and intonation.

How might teaching change over time?

Fluency reading depends on strong routines. Early on, focus on establishing expectations and observing pupils closely, often from the front. As routines develop, move around the room to monitor and support. Begin to model and discuss features such as rhythm and intonation for pupils to imitate.

Should pupils annotate texts to improve prosody?

Light annotation (e.g. underlining emphasis or marking punctuation) can help, but it should be used sparingly, as it can reduce time for modelling, practice and discussion. Chris Such does not recommend a heavy focus on text marking as it can detract from time spent on fluency.

Should I encourage pupils to read more quickly?

No. While speed is part of fluency, the focus should be on accurate decoding first. Speed and prosody improve naturally through repeated, accurate practice.

What can go wrong, and how can I fix it?

Common issues include inappropriate text difficulty and ineffective grouping. Address these by adjusting texts, support, or organisation to better match pupils' needs.

Problem	Solution
There is an odd number of pupils in the class, which means that pairs can't be formed.	Create one group of three consisting of stronger readers.
Despite reading the text repeatedly, pupils don't seem to read the text with increased fluency.	The difficulty of the text is likely to be too high. In subsequent lessons, try using texts with simpler sentence structures and vocabulary.
Most pupils read the text completely fluently on the first attempt.	The difficulty of the text is likely to be too low. In subsequent lessons, try using texts with more complex sentence structures and vocabulary. Equally, if your class consists predominantly of very fluent readers, their time might be better spent on other reading lesson structures.
The classroom is too noisy during paired reading.	Explain to pupils that paired reading needs 'quiet voices'; a volume that means their partner can hear them but not someone on the other side of the room.
Pupils are not following as their partner reads.	Actively observe pupils while this routine is embedded. Use shorter chunks of text initially to help pupils build these routines. If all else fails, consider asking pupils to alternate the sentences that they read, swapping who reads the first sentence each time.
Some pairs only have time to read the text once or twice in the time that other pairs are reading three or four times.	Ensure that the slowest readers are paired up with the quickest. If necessary, consider providing the slowest readers with experience of the text before the lesson begins (e.g. as part of an intervention or through a brief pre-teach at any moment in the day when the rest of the class is working silently).

Close Read

Purpose: To allow pupils to think deeply and analytically about author choices, language and the impact of these on a reader, as well as considering themselves as readers and how their individuality may shape interpretation.

What it is: The opportunity to explore, in detail, a carefully selected passage of text to uncover layers of meaning, language choices, and authorial intent.

Texts:

- This will often be an **extract** from a novel the class is reading.
- It may be an extract that has already been explored in less depth as part of extended reading or a reading fluency lesson.
- Alternatively, it may be a **linked non-fiction text or a new novel extract** as part of broadening exposure to different texts.
- The close read text could be **one or two separate chunks** of text (from different places in the text).
- It could be a **paragraph** to a few **pages**.
- Stories, poetries and speeches work well. The focus of the text should be on **high-quality language choices and clear themes**.

Pedagogy:

- The **focus** may be very specific i.e. use of figurative language, or broader – authors language choices.
- It may use a range of **reading approaches** over time and over the lesson or just one i.e. – teacher read, paired read, independent read, choral read etc.
- Close read lessons may contain a range of discussion types including **explanation** by the teacher, teacher-led **discussion** and dialogue, **questioning**, opportunities to share **opinions, group or pair discussion**, and sharing of **observations**.
- **Checks for understanding** should be used – talk partners, written responses, oracy tasks, whiteboards, cold-calling.
- Writing is about **exploration not evidencing**.
- Opportunities for **pupil-led discussion, sharing of observations, asking questions and personal reflection** beyond the lesson focus should be encouraged so learners reflect on themselves as readers.
- They may focus on word, phrase, sentence or text level analysis.
- There should be opportunities for learners to share opinions and observations elicited by questioning and discussion.
- **Responses** may include:
 - Short whiteboard style responses
 - Lengthier answers to questions (SATs style – but these should be limited).
 - Whole paragraph analysis of a theme or idea.
 - Summaries
 - Oracy activities.
- These should only be done in response to modelling and should make use of sentence stems and scaffolds.
- **Strategies** should be modelled metacognitively throughout.
- Only 1/3 of this lesson is spent reading. The focus is on discussion. This is the opposite of extended read lessons.

Strategies:

Strategy name	How to model
Scan	Model quickly look through the text to find specific words, facts, dates, or information. Discuss approaches to different questions, i.e. looking for numbers if you know it's a date or statistic, looking for capitals for names, looking for keywords etc.
Skim	Model reading quickly to get the main idea or overall meaning of the text.
Highlight and Underline	Underline the Question words. Consider how to answer this type of question.
Solve it! Switch it! Search it!	Solve it – does the morphology of the word and what we know about word families help us understand the word. Switch – is there a word that would fit in this place in the sentence which might explain its meaning? Search it – if we search the words around this word does it give us a clue about the meaning?
Decide, Check, Answer	When answering a question, particularly true or false, fact or opinion or tick box questions: 1. Decide your answer 2. Check this against the text. 3. Does the evidence support your answer. 4. Now you can write or answer.
Mental Model	As you read, model how what you have thought changes one sentence at a time so learners can see how your mental model grows.
Summarise	Model using mental models and key words to turn lengthy descriptions into key word or bullet point verbal summarise. Model doing this a sentence at a time building on the previous sentence as you go.
Impression	Explicitly explain that the word impression means what does it make you think or what does it make you imagine. Use this phrasing when modelling and answering impression questions in discussion.
Evidence	Model how you find answers in the text and how you then shape answers and explanations around these.
PEE(L)	Model using the PEE and PEEL acronyms to make a POINT, provide EVIDENCE and offer and explanation. Where relevant, extend this to linking the explanation back to the point.
Author - Reader	Model how when you are asked about author choices, you always respond by talking about the impact on the reader.

Prep

- Identify the passage of text to be read and read it carefully. Consider how you might unpick it with learners. Are there any themes you would identify? Do you know where it fits in the wider context?
- Read through the planning and look at the reading approaches, lesson structure, discussion format, questions, learning tasks and lesson design.
- Consider any adaptations you may need to make for your class:
 - Do your class need scaffolds
 - Do you class need additional challenges?
 - Should you add some additional pause points or questions?
 - Do you want to adapt the discussion format, learning tasks or reading approach? Annotate these on the planning.

Lesson Structure

1. Frame the learning & Reconnect:

- Teacher places the reading for today in the wider reading context. How does today's reading link to previous and future reading. Is it an extract – if so, from where? If a complete text, share the genre.
- Teacher explains what strategies we are focussing on today with our reading.

2. First read (gist) - 5 mins

- Teacher reads aloud and pupils follow.
- OR
- Pupils read silently (when appropriate/older). A range of reading approaches may be used here – choral, jump in etc. But the focus is on the expert read.
- Quick check for basic understanding.

3. Vocabulary and clarification (5 mins)

- Explicit teaching of key words in the moment or using vocabulary slides where appropriate or in the moment explanation when not specified.
 - **Show** the word
 - **Say** the word
 - **MTYT** the word for pronunciation a few times.
 - **Define** - Give the definition.
 - **Explain** - explain the meaning in context. Make any connections or links.
 - **Non** - Give non-examples.
 - **Morphology** - Unpick the morphology if relevant.
 - **Use** – ask the pupils to use the word in a sentence with a partner – choose some to share – address any misconceptions.
- Ensure all pupils can access the text. Discuss anything learners are unfamiliar with or don't understand after the first read.

4. Second read (guided)

- Pupils reread the extract using a range of reading approaches.
- Shared rereading (using a range of reading approaches) with deeper questioning and discussions or just deeper questioning and discussion if reading has already been sufficient. This can cover a range of reading domains and strategies, but the focus is on detailed analysis.
- Through questioning and discussion using a range of discussion types, the teacher zooms in and out on words/ sentence/ paragraph/text level using open ended and closed questions. This will include all the pedagogical options mentioned previously.

5. Discussion and/or written response

- Pupils answer questions through focussed oracy discussion and/or written responses. During this time:
 - Pupils justify answers with evidence.
 - Complete short analytical writing or answers to questions (one or many_ may be completed).

Key features:

- Short but challenging extract.
- High-quality questioning.
- Evidence-based answers.
- Lots of detailed explanation and discussion.
- Slow, deliberate reading.
- High cognitive demand.
- Opportunities for learners to share and reflect.

Outcome: Improved inference and textual analysis leading to better understanding of author choices and the wider text.

How do I support pupils who might struggle with close reading lessons?

To support pupils who may struggle with close reading, teachers can use a range of approaches to make texts accessible. Reading aloud ensures all pupils can engage with the text, while echo reading can support those still developing decoding skills during paired reading. When independent reading is expected, emergent readers can be supported through turn-taking read aloud. Open-ended questions allow all pupils to contribute to discussions, and key ideas should be summarised clearly in simple language to reinforce understanding before moving on.

How do I Stretch pupils who may need less support in close reading lessons?

Close reading lessons provide valuable opportunities to challenge high-attaining pupils. Open-ended questions encourage them to explore texts deeply, offer original interpretations, and introduce alternative perspectives to their peers. This is most effective when teachers use rich, thought-provoking texts that reward deeper exploration and discussion.

How might my teaching of close reading lessons change over time?

Close reading lessons develop over time as pupils become more confident discussing texts. Early on, pupils may give short, simple answers and rely on the teacher to guide and summarise discussion. As trust, routines, and confidence grow, pupils become more willing to share ideas, ask questions, and respond to each other. By consistently using engaging texts, thoughtful questions, and supportive discussion, classroom conversations gradually become richer, deeper, and more rewarding. At first, the adult may mostly read aloud, as learners become more confident and fluent, other approaches to reading may be used to support and increase reading stamina thought this is not the focus of these lessons.

Problem	Solution
Pupils are initially reluctant to offer answers to questions.	Avoid eliciting responses from a few pupils at a time. Instead of asking "What does this mean?", ask pupils to build on what has been said. As pupils become more accustomed to answering questions, you can rely on this strategy less. Use cold and warm calling to support. Scaffold these with other checks for understanding.
Pupils' answers are consistently brief and underdeveloped.	Ask pupils to justify their answers by asking them how they reached a conclusion (e.g. "What makes you think that?"). Encourage pupils to expand on their answers by justifying what they think. Model how you do this. Developing a classroom environment in which this is the norm takes time and persistence.
Pupils rarely build on each other's answers.	Ask questions of the class that explicitly link individual pupils' answers. This should be done sensitively, e.g. "Sofia said this, but Jacob said that. Why might they agree or disagree?" Create a safe atmosphere for pupils to ask questions. Once a discussion begins to flow, pupils can begin with simple requests, e.g. "Do you have any evidence?" or "Were you curious about anything in that paragraph?"

Extended Read Lesson

Purpose: To build stamina, vocabulary, and overall comprehension of longer texts.

What it is: Sustained reading of a substantial section of a high-quality text (often a class novel or longer non-fiction).

What does it provide: The opportunity to experience longer and more sustained reading to build-up reading miles and reading stamina. It focusses on breadth of text experience where close focuses on depth. Reading is interspersed with brief discussions as you read, rather than lengthy focussed tasks. Initially a lot of the reading is done by the teacher; over time, more of this is given to the learners.

The texts:

- Usually several pages or chapters of the class novel.
- It is unlikely to be a short extract or separate text.
- It will either be read by the teacher under the visualiser if the class has over 80% who are still developing their fluency, or may be read in sections or the entirety individually or chorally. Those not fluent will always listen to someone else read the text and this should always be a competent reader.

The prep:

- Identify the passage of text to be read and **read it carefully. Consider** where you might need to pause to define or pause to question understanding. Annotate your copy of the text and/or planning with pencil notes. Ideally you will have read the whole book in advance.
- **Read through the planning** and look at the **reading approaches, lesson structure, discussion format, questions, learning tasks and lesson design.**
- Consider any adaptations you may need to make for your class?
 - Do your class need scaffolds?
 - Do you class need additional challenges?
 - Should you add some additional pause points or questions?
 - Which sections could your class begin to read independently?
 - Does anyone need independent sections read aloud?

Annotate these on the planning.

Note: Only 1/3 of Extended Read Lessons are spent in discussion 2/3s is spent reading. This is the opposite of Close Read lessons.

Lesson Structure:

1. **Context and recap**
 - Brief reminder of previous learning.
 - If it's the first lesson, show the title, author and cover.
 - If it's not the first lesson, summarise the text so far briefly. Could use TTYP or a retrieval activity such as a one word summary or odd one out statement but it must be pacy.
2. **Teacher read-aloud (often central)**
 - Adult reads most of the new section in Y2, 3 and 4, if the process is new to the children or they lack fluency. Increasing amounts of independent reading in Y5 and 6 and over time.
 - Pupils follow in their copies using reading rulers.
 - Occasional pause points for quick explanations and questioning to promote understanding. Discussion and explanations should be brief. 1 or 2 minutes per question. Not lengthy discussion. Less than 1/3 of the lesson should be on discussion.
 - Zoom in and out on words/ sentence/ paragraph/text level to support understanding.
 - Clarify key vocabulary in context.
 - Maintain narrative flow.

- Use the routine 'Finger Freeze, eyes on me' or 'Pause' to get pupils to pause and listen when reading without losing their place.
- Model metacognitive strategies as you read by TOL (thinking out Loud). i.e. That was a really long, confusing sentence. I'm going to read it again and break it down and check I understand each part before I put it back together. Over time, ask learners to use this strategy themselves.

3. Post-reading discussion or written response.

4. This is not essential. The essential elements are the reading and brief questioning.
5. If time, the lesson may finish with a broader comprehension question or questions – orally or in writing.
6. The focus is on understanding what has been read.
7. May include partner talk.

Key features:

- Longer text section
- Emphasis on meaning and enjoyment
- Teacher read-aloud is prominent
- Limited but purposeful questioning
- Maintains story flow

Outcome: Stronger comprehension across a longer text, increased stamina and richer language exposure.

Problem	Solution
Most of the lesson is spent discussing text instead of reading.	Be strict with how much time you spend explaining aspects of the text and asking questions. Use brief paraphrasing and timely summaries to maintain pupils' understanding as the text moves at pace.
Some pupils struggle to follow the text as it is read aloud.	Encourage pupils to follow the text if they can but allow others just to listen where necessary. Read with a text under a document camera so that pupils can choose to follow only sometimes. As pupils' reading fluency develops, encourage them to try following texts again.
Exceptionally fluent readers are reading ahead in the text, leading them to struggle to follow when you pause to discuss the text.	In almost all cases, pupils can learn to follow as you read, but if this is not possible, ask these pupils to just listen as you read aloud.
When asking pupils to read chunks of text independently (i.e. part of the lesson with a class of more-developed readers), you suspect some pupils are not reading the text.	Ask pupils to summarise the chunk of text they have read on mini-whiteboards or in exercise books. (This is a good routine to embed regardless.)
Pupils have a question about an aspect of the text.	This is a good thing! Discuss the question briefly. If the question requires more time and would slow the pace of the reading down more than you would like, consider using this chunk of text for a close reading lesson and referring back to the questions asked by pupils.

HOW DO I SUPPORT PUPILS WHO MIGHT STRUGGLE WITH EXTENDED READING LESSONS?

The version of extended reading in which you read aloud to pupils rarely needs much adaptation. However, pupils with listening comprehension difficulties are likely to benefit when you summarise a section of text or explain unfamiliar words or phrases. They can also be supported at the start of reading lessons by summaries of the entire text read so far.

Most pupils should be encouraged to follow the words in the text as you read aloud, but some might find this too challenging, especially those still struggling with the basics of decoding. It makes sense to allow these pupils just to listen as you read until their increasing capabilities allow them to follow the text with the rest of the class. Reading the text under a document camera can allow these pupils to choose when to follow the words and prepare them for following along at a later point in their reading development. If many pupils in a class struggle to follow along (as may be the case at the start of Year 2, for example), then it might be preferable to simply allow all pupils the choice of whether to follow along or just listen. Pupils can then be gently encouraged to try following along with their own copy of the text when they feel ready to do so.

More adaptation is likely to be needed when teaching the version of extended reading in which pupils are sometimes asked to read independently. There might be some pupils who are still at the earliest stages of decoding or who find such independent reading impossible. While other pupils are reading quietly, you (or a teaching assistant) can read the same chunk of text aloud to these pupils in a small group. These pupils still require active decoding practice through reading fluency lessons and/or suitable interventions, depending on their barriers to reading development. (For more on assessing and addressing reading difficulties, see Chapter 21.)

HOW DO I STRETCH PUPILS WHO MIGHT FIND EXTENDED READING LESSONS LESS CHALLENGING THAN OTHER PUPILS DO?

A central part of the challenge in extended reading lessons comes from the texts themselves. You should ensure the texts you read with pupils delve into language and concepts that are new to all pupils.

Most of the questions you ask in extended reading lessons should be designed to ensure pupils are making basic sense of the text rather than eliciting deeper exploration, which is more appropriate in close reading lessons (see Chapter 10). However, you can use questions to stretch pupils who will benefit from a greater degree of challenge. You might, for example, ask an overarching, open-ended question before you read a chapter, something for pupils to consider as the chapter progresses. You might then give pupils an opportunity to offer their thoughts on this question towards the end of the lesson, perhaps even asking pupils to put their ideas into writing.