

A Level Drama & Theatre Course Handbook



“There is no formula to the way we make theatre. However, it always starts with the story. No, it starts before then. It starts with an itch, a need, an instinct.’ Emma Rice - *Kneehigh*

What will I study?

Component 1: Devising

Component 2: Text in performance

Component 3: Theatre makers in practice

Year 12 Overview

| Term | Year 12 – Teacher 1 | Year 12 – Teacher 2 |
|----------|--|---|
| Autumn 1 | Exploration of practitioners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constantin Stanislavski Antonin Artaud Contemporary practitioner/theatre company Practitioner performance project Component 1 & 3 | Exploration of practitioners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bertolt Brecht Steven Berkoff Contemporary practitioner/theatre company Practitioner performance project Component 1 & 3 |
| Autumn 2 | Exploration of set text <i>Equus</i> by Peter Shaffer Component 3 | Evaluation of live theatre National Theatre Collection / Nottingham Playhouse or Theatre Royal Component 3 Monologues & duologues Component 2 |
| Spring 1 | Exploration of set text <i>Equus</i> by Peter Shaffer Component 3 | Introduction to Greek Theatre & set text <i>Lysistrata</i> by Aristophanes Component 3 |
| Spring 2 | Exploration of text for devising Component 1 | Exploration of practitioner for devising Component 1 |
| Summer 1 | Component 1: Devising Creation of original pieces of theatre in small groups Written/presented portfolio | Component 1: Devising Creation of original pieces of theatre in small groups Written/presented portfolio |
| Summer 2 | Mock exam preparation Component 3 Component 1: Devising Creation of original pieces of theatre in small groups Written/presented portfolio | Mock exam preparation Component 3 Component 1: Devising Creation of original pieces of theatre in small groups Written/presented portfolio |

Year 13 Overview

| Term | Year 13 – Teacher 1 | Year 13 – Teacher 2 |
|------|---------------------|---------------------|
|------|---------------------|---------------------|

| | | |
|-----------------|---|--|
| Autumn 1 | <p>Component 1: Devising Completion & performance of original pieces of theatre in small groups Written/presented portfolio</p> <p>Exploration of set text <i>Lysistrata</i> by Aristophanes Component 3</p> | <p>Component 1: Devising Completion & performance of original pieces of theatre in small groups Written/presented portfolio</p> <p>Revision of set text <i>Equus</i> by Peter Shaffer Component 3</p> |
| Autumn 2 | <p>Component 1: Devising Completion & performance of original pieces of theatre in small groups Written/presented portfolio</p> <p>Exploration of set text <i>Lysistrata</i> by Aristophanes Component 3</p> | <p>Component 1: Devising Completion & performance of original pieces of theatre in small groups Written/presented portfolio</p> <p>Evaluation of live theatre Component 3</p> |
| Spring 1 | <p>Exploration of set text <i>Lysistrata</i> by Aristophanes Component 3</p> <p>Monologues & duologues Component 2</p> | <p>Evaluation of live theatre Component 3</p> <p>Group scripted pieces Component 2</p> |
| Spring 2 | <p>Component 2: Performance Exam</p> <p>Revision of set text <i>Lysistrata</i> by Aristophanes Component 3</p> | <p>Component 2: Performance Exam</p> <p>Revision of live theatre Revision of set text <i>Equus</i> by Peter Shaffer Component 3</p> |
| Summer 1 | <p>Revision of set text <i>Lysistrata</i> by Aristophanes Component 3</p> | <p>Revision of live theatre Revision of set text <i>Equus</i> by Peter Shaffer Component 3</p> |
| Summer 2 | Component 3 Exam | Component 3 Exam |

Overview of the course

COMPONENT 1: DEVSING

40% of qualification, 80 marks

Content overview

- Devise an original performance piece, inspired by one key extract from a performance text and a theatre practitioner.
- Performer or designer routes available.

Assessment overview

1. A portfolio (60 marks), can be handwritten/typed (2500 – 3000 words) or recorded/verbal evidence (12 – 14 minutes).
2. The devised performance or design realisation (20 marks).



COMPONENT 2: TEXT IN PERFORMANCE

20% of the qualification, 60 marks

Content overview

- A group performance/design realisation of one key extract from a performance text.
- A monologue or duologue performance/design realisation from one key extract from a different performance text.

Assessment overview

- Externally assessed by a visiting examiner.
- Group performance/design realisation (36 marks) and monologue or duologue/design realisation (24 marks).



COMPONENT 3: THEATRE MAKES IN PRACTICE

Written examination: 2 hours 30 minutes

40% of the qualification - 80 marks

SECTION A: Live Theatre Evaluation (20 marks)

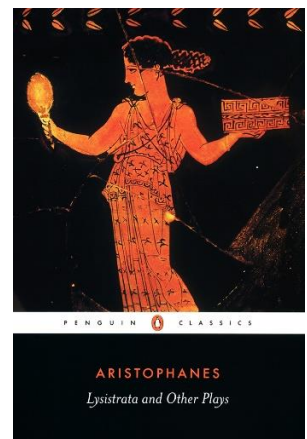
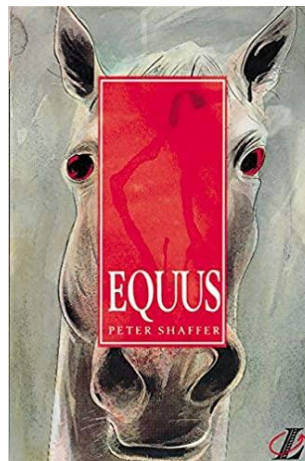
- You will answer one extended response question from a choice of two, analysing and evaluating a live theatre performance you have seen.
- You are allowed to take in theatre evaluation notes of up to a maximum of 500 words.

SECTION B: Realising a Performance Text (36 marks)

- You will answer two extended response questions on how you might interpret and realise an extract in performance. It will be an unseen extract from your chosen text.
- You will answer from the perspective of a performer and a designer.

Section C: Interpreting a Performance Text (24 marks)

- You will answer one extended response question on an unseen named section from your chosen performance text.
- You will demonstrate how your re-imagined production concept will communicate ideas to a contemporary audience.
- You will also need to outline how the work of your chosen theatre practitioner has influenced your overall production concept and demonstrate an awareness of the performance text in its original performance conditions.



Components in more detail

COMPONENT 1: DEVISING

40% of qualification, 80 marks

Choice of text

Centres have a free choice when selecting the **one key extract** from a performance text. You will explore the whole play text before selecting an extract. Recent text choices include:

- 4.48 Psychosis by Sarah Kane
- Nights at the Circus by Tom Morris & Emma Rice
- Everyman by Carol Ann Duffy

Choice of practitioner

Centres have a free choice when selecting a practitioner. A practitioner is an individual or a company that has an established and defined approach to the creation of performance, and which creates both theatrical performances and theory that informs this practical work. Recent practitioner choices include:

- Katie Mitchell
- Kneehigh
- Steven Berkoff

Group sizes and time limits

Groups must have between **three** and **six** performance students. In addition, there can be up to one designer per role, per group.

| Group size | Recommended minimum performance times | Maximum performance times |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 3–4 performance students | 15 minutes | 20 minutes |
| 5–6 performance students | 20 minutes | 30 minutes |

The portfolio

All students must produce a portfolio documenting and reflecting on their exploratory process and the skills and techniques that they have developed in response to the text, and the influence of their chosen theatre practitioner. Each portfolio **must** cover the following:

- an exploration of the chosen text and practitioner
- an analysis and evaluation of the student's contribution to the devising process through their ability to create and develop ideas as theatre makers
- an analysis and evaluation of the student's ability to make connections between the
- chosen text/practitioner and their intended aims and objectives
- an understanding of social, historical and cultural contexts.

COMPONENT 2: TEXT IN PERFORMANCE

20% of the qualification, 60 marks

Text and extract choice

Centres have a choice when selecting texts. However, the **two key extracts** must be from **two different** performance texts, these texts must meet the following criteria. The performance texts must be professionally published, substantial and have a running time of at least 60 minutes.

Monologue and duologue performances

Recent monologue/duologue text choices include:

- One Man, Two Guvnors by Richard Bean
- Educating Rita by Willy Russell
- The Welkin by Lucy Kirkwood
- Medea by Ben Power
- Road by Kim Cartwright

Group sizes and time limits

| Number of performers | Minimum performance times | Maximum performance times |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Monologue (1 performer) | 2 minutes | 3 minutes |
| Duologue (2 performers) | 5 minutes | 6 minutes |

Group performance

A group must have between a minimum of **three** and maximum of **six** performance students. In addition, there can be up to one designer per role, per group. Recent group performance text choices include:

- Touched by Stephen Lowe
- Brief Encounter by Emma Rice
- The Thrill of Love by Amanda Whittington
- The Real Inspector Hound by Tom Stoppard

Group sizes and time limits – Group performance

| Number of performers | Minimum performance times | Maximum performance times |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 3–4 performance students | 20 minutes | 30 minutes |
| 5–6 performance students | 35 minutes | 45 minutes |

Explanation of intention

For each performance, each candidate must produce a brief explanation of the intention for each performance or design (150–250 words per key extract studied).

COMPONENT 3: THEATRE MAKES IN PRACTICE

Written examination: 2 hours 30 minutes

40% of the qualification - 80 marks

SECTION A: Live Theatre Evaluation (20 marks)

You will reflect on your experience as an informed member of an audience at a live theatre performance, enabling you to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of performance through analysis and evaluation.

Notes

You are allowed to take into the exam theatre evaluation notes of up to a maximum of 500 words. These notes may include reference to:

- performers, including performers in specific roles
- design considerations, including the use of costume, set, lighting and sound
- the director's concept/interpretation and the chosen performance style
- impact on the audience, including, specifically, on the student, and how this was achieved
- the use of the theatre space
- how ideas were communicated during the performance.

Recent productions

Recent productions seen include:

Gecko's *The Wedding*, directed by Amit Lahav

Frantic Assembly's *Othello*, directed by Scott Graham

National Theatre's *Small Island*, directed by Rufus Norris

Splendid's *Dr Faustus*, directed by Kerry Frampton



SECTION B: Realising a Performance Text (36 marks)

Equus, Peter Shaffer - Penguin Classics

ISBN 9780141188904

Unseen extract

You will respond to an **unseen extract** from your chosen performance text in the examination. You will be asked to consider a possible staging of the selected unseen extract and the intended impact their creative ideas will have on an audience. You will answer two 18-mark questions – one from the point of view of a performer and one from the point of view of a designer.

Exploring the performance text

You will consider the following elements when exploring the performance text:

- characterisation of key roles including the use of physicality and voice
- staging, levels and proxemics

- stage space
- entrances and exits
- visual and non-verbal forms of communication
- design elements
- relationship between actor and audience
- ways in which the playwright has structured the text and uses elements such as plot, language, form, genre, structure, characterisation and stage directions to communicate ideas
- mood and atmosphere
- performance style and use of theatrical devices
- relevant subject-specific vocabulary.

Section C: Interpreting a Performance Text (24 marks)

Interpreting one performance text, in the light of one practitioner for a contemporary audience

Lysistrata, Aristophanes (translated by Alan H. Sommerstein) – Download edition
Practitioner - Bertolt Brecht

Interpreting the performance text

You will practically explore the **complete performance text** in the light of the chosen practitioner in order to outline and justify your ideas for a production concept. You will need to develop an integral understanding of the text as a whole in order to interpret it for a contemporary audience. You will assume the role of a director and will need to outline and justify how different theatre makers and theatrical elements work alongside the methodologies of a recognised theatre practitioner.

Elements to consider

- characterisation of key roles
- staging and space
- visual communication
- design elements
- relationship between actor and audience
- ways in which the playwright has structured the text and uses elements such as plot, language, form, structure, characterisation and stage directions to communicate ideas to an audience
- mood and atmosphere
- performance style and theatrical devices
- practitioner methodology
- historical, social and cultural context and its relevance to themselves and a contemporary audience
- relevant subject-specific vocabulary.

Assessment Objectives

| Students must: | | % in GCE A Level |
|----------------|--|------------------|
| A01 | Create and develop ideas to communicate meaning as part of the theatre-making process, making connections between dramatic theory and practice | 20 |
| A02 | Apply theatrical skills to realise artistic intentions in live performance | 30 |
| A03 | Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of how drama and theatre is developed and performed | 30 |
| A04 | Analyse and evaluate their own work and the work of others | 20 |
| Total | | 100% |

Breakdown of Assessment Objectives

| Component | Assessment Objectives | | | | Total for all Assessment Objectives |
|---|-----------------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------------------------------|
| | A01 % | A02 % | A03 % | A04 % | |
| Component 1: Devising | 20 | 10 | 0 | 10 | 40% |
| Component 2: Text in Performance | 0 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 20% |
| Component 3: Theatre Makers in Practice | 0 | 0 | 30 | 10 | 40% |
| Total for GCE A Level | 20% | 30% | 30% | 20% | 100% |



Super-Curricular Drama & Theatre

Listed below are a wide variety of play texts, websites and resources to help you to aim higher in your study of drama and theatre. Pick one or two to get started and go from there...

A-Level performance texts

| Playwright | Text |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Sophocles (adapted by Don Taylor) | Antigone |
| Christopher Marlowe | Doctor Faustus |
| Henrik Ibsen (adapted by Richard Eyre) | Hedda Gabler |
| Aristophanes (translated by Alan H. Sommerstein) | Lysistrata |
| Jean Genet (translated by Bernard Frechtman) | The Maids |
| Richard Brinsley Sheridan | The School for Scandal |
| William Shakespeare | The Tempest |
| Samuel Beckett | Waiting for Godot |
| Georg Büchner (translated by John Mackendrick) | Woyzeck |
| Dario Fo (adapted by Gavin Richards) | Accidental Death Of An Anarchist |
| Laura Wade | Colder Than Here |
| Peter Shaffer | Equus |
| August Wilson | Fences |
| Sophie Treadwell | Machinal |
| Polly Stenham | That Face |
| Sophocles | Antigone |
| William Shakespeare | Much Ado About Nothing |
| Carlo Goldoni | A Servant to Two Masters |
| Henrik Ibsen | Hedda Gabler |
| Bertolt Brecht | The Caucasian Chalk Circle |
| Federico García Lorca | Yerma |
| Tennessee Williams | The Glass Menagerie |
| Steven Berkoff | Metamorphosis |
| Caryl Churchill | Cloud Nine |
| Timberlake Wertenbaker | Our Country's Good |
| Polly Teale | Brontë |
| Dario Fo | Accidental Death of an Anarchist |
| Jez Butterworth | Jerusalem |

Useful links

National Theatre Collection:

<https://www.dramaonlinelibrary.com/pages/the-national-theatre-collection>

Username: 9Pj13Fu(zz

Password: 6Da@9Je(o@

Gecko – The time of your life

https://youtu.be/5PQpxi7h_rc

Performances/clips:

DV8

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NShJJr1ztkM>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7c9ToyDs3mY>

The Paper Birds

<https://www.thepaperbirds.com/ask-me-anything/>

Practitioners:

Antonin Artaud

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DK_vZuLYHcw

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yn-lvqV36jq>

Kneehigh

<https://www.kneehigh.co.uk/>

Bertolt Brecht

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c7fqMPDcKXM&t=498s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-828KqtTtA>

Joan Littlewood

<https://www.rsc.org.uk/miss-littlewood/joan-littlewood-rebel-with-a-cause>

Steven Berkoff

<https://www.stevenberkoff.com/>

Punchdrunk

<https://www.punchdrunk.org.uk/>

Complicite

<http://www.complicite.org/company.php>

Constantin Stanislavski

<https://www.biography.com/actor/constantin-stanislavski>

Katie Mitchell

<https://burtsdrama.com/2020/09/28/practitioner-guide-katie-mitchell/>

Frantic Assembly

<https://www.franticassembly.co.uk/frantic-digital/>

Further reading

- Mark Ravenhill - Over There
- Henrik Ibsen – A Doll's House
- Anton Chekhov – Three Sisters
- Anton Chekhov – Uncle Vanya
- Ad De Bont – Mirad, a Boy From Bosnia
- Federico Garcia Lorca – Bloody Wedding
- Federico Garcia Lorca – Yerma
- Jessica Swale – Blue Stockings
- Arthur Miller – The Crucible
- Arthur Miller – A View from the Bridge
- Arthur Miller – Death of a Salesman
- Martin McDonagh - The Pillowman
- Martin McDonagh – The Lieutenant of Inishmore
- Neil Simon – The Odd Couple
- Franz Kafka – Metamorphosis
- Oscar Wilde - The Importance of being Earnest
- Tennessee Williams - A Streetcar Named Desire
- Tennessee Williams - Cat on a Hot Tin Roof
- Bertolt Brecht – Caucasian Chalk Circle
- Bertolt Brecht - The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui
- Bertolt Brecht – The Threepenny Opera
- Timberlake Wertenbaker – Our Country's Good
- The Monologue Audition - A Practical Guide for Actors By Karen Kohlhaas ISBN: 9781854596086
- The Methuen Drama Book of Monologues for Young Actors By Anne Harvey and Jane Lapotaire
- Audition Speeches for Younger Actors 16+ by Jean Marlow
- An Actor's Work – Konstantin Stanislavski
- The Complete Stanislavski Toolkit – Bella Merlin
- A sourcebook on Naturalist Theatre – Edited by Christopher Innes
- Performance studies: An Introduction – Richard Schechner
- Devising Performance: A Critical History – Deidre Heddon and Jane Milling
- Analysis: An Introduction Coursebook – Edited by Colin Counsell and Laurie Wolf
- The Routledge Companion to Theatre and Performance – Paul Allain and Jen Harvie

Plus, entire bookshelves full in our offices – just come and ask to look borrow!

Sample exam papers

Section A: Live Theatre Evaluation

SECTION A: LIVE THEATRE EVALUATION

Answer ONE of the following questions in this section with reference to a theatre performance you have seen. Write your answer in the spaces provided.

EITHER

- 1 Analyse and evaluate the live performance you have seen in light of the following statement:

'Theatre in the 21st century is out of touch with its audience.'

Your answer should:

- include analysis and evaluation of key moments from the performance you have seen and the contribution made by different theatre makers
- offer **balanced consideration** between your analysis and evaluation of the performance and your response to the statement.

(20)

OR

- 2 Analyse and evaluate the live performance you have seen in light of the following statement:

'Actors are nothing without Designers.'

Your answer should:

- include analysis and evaluation of key moments from the performance you have seen and the contribution made by different theatre makers
- offer **balanced consideration** between your analysis and evaluation of the performance and your response to the statement.

(20)

Section B: Realising a Performance Text

SECTION B: PAGE TO STAGE: REALISING A PERFORMANCE TEXT

Answer **BOTH** questions in this section with reference to the performance text you have studied.

You need to read and refer to the extract in the source booklet from the text you have studied.

Indicate which text you have studied by marking a cross in the box ☒.

| Performance texts: | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| <i>Accidental Death of an Anarchist</i> , Dario Fo | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Colder Than Here</i> , Laura Wade | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Equus</i> , Peter Shaffer | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Fences</i> , August Wilson | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Machinal</i> , Sophie Treadwell | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>That Face</i> , Polly Stenham | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

- 3 As a **performer**, outline how you would use **performance skills** to interact with **at least one other** character in this extract.

Your answer should make reference to the performance text as a whole.

(18)

- 4 As a **designer**, outline how **one** theatrical element could be developed to create visual impact in this extract.

Your answer should make reference to the performance text as a whole.

(18)

Section C: Interpreting a Performance Text

Indicate which text you are using in your answer by marking a cross in the box ☒.

| | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|--|--|-------------------------------------|
| <i>Antigone</i> , Sophocles (adapted by Don Taylor) | <input type="checkbox"/> | | <i>The School for Scandal</i> , Richard Brinsley Sheridan | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Doctor Faustus (Text A)</i> , Christopher Marlowe | <input type="checkbox"/> | | <i>The Tempest</i> , William Shakespeare | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Hedda Gabler</i> , Henrik Ibsen (adapted by Richard Eyre) | <input type="checkbox"/> | | <i>Waiting for Godot</i> , Samuel Beckett | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Lysistrata</i> , Aristophanes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | <i>Woyzeck</i> , Georg Büchner | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>The Maids</i> , Jean Genet | <input type="checkbox"/> | | | |

You are the director of a new production concept of the performance text you have studied.

EITHER

- 5 As a director, discuss how you would apply the methodologies of your chosen theatre practitioner to communicate effectively with the audience in your production concept.

Your answer must focus on the named section listed on page 20 of this question paper for your chosen performance text.

Your answer must make reference to:

- the overall aims of your production concept in response to the play as a whole
- how your practical ideas will work in performance
- the original performance conditions of your chosen performance text.

(24)

OR

- 6 As a director, discuss how you would apply the methodologies of your chosen theatre practitioner to explore stage space in your production concept.

Your answer must focus on the named section listed on page 20 of this question paper for your chosen performance text.

Your answer must make reference to:

- the overall aims of your production concept in response to the play as a whole
- how your practical ideas will work in performance
- the original performance conditions of your chosen performance text.

(24)

| Title & Date of Assessment | E | D | C | B | A | A* |
|---------------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
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| Title & Date of Assessment | |
| Level/Grade achieved: | What went well: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • |
| Areas for improvement | Even better if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • |

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|---------------------------------------|--|
| Title & Date of Assessment | |
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| Level/Grade achieved: | What went well: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • |
| Areas for improvement | Even better if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • |

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| Level/Grade achieved: | What went well: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • |
| Areas for improvement | Even better if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • |

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| Level/Grade achieved: | What went well: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • |
| Areas for improvement | Even better if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • |

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| Level/Grade achieved: | What went well: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • |
| Areas for improvement | Even better if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • |

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| Level/Grade achieved: | What went well: |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • |
| Areas for improvement | Even better if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • |

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| Title & Date of Assessment | |
| Level/Grade achieved: | What went well: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • |
| Areas for improvement | Even better if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • |

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| Areas for improvement | Even better if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • |

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| Title & Date of Assessment | |
| Level/Grade achieved: | What went well: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • |
| Areas for improvement | Even better if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • |