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(54) **HANDS FREE SHOEHORN**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

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A hands free shoehorn is shown and described. The shoehorn includes a guide member for guiding a foot of a user into an opening of a shoe. A handle projects upwardly from the guide member to facilitate insertion and maneuvering of the shoehorn. An entrapment member generally parallel to the guide member captures a heel wall of the shoe between the guide member and the entrapment member in sufficiently close fit to enable the shoehorn to remain coupled to the shoe in an operative position without the shoehorn being held by the user. The user may then slip his or her foot into the shoe with the shoehorn stably mounted on the shoe such that the user need not either hold the shoe horn or balance body weight on one leg while donning the shoe.

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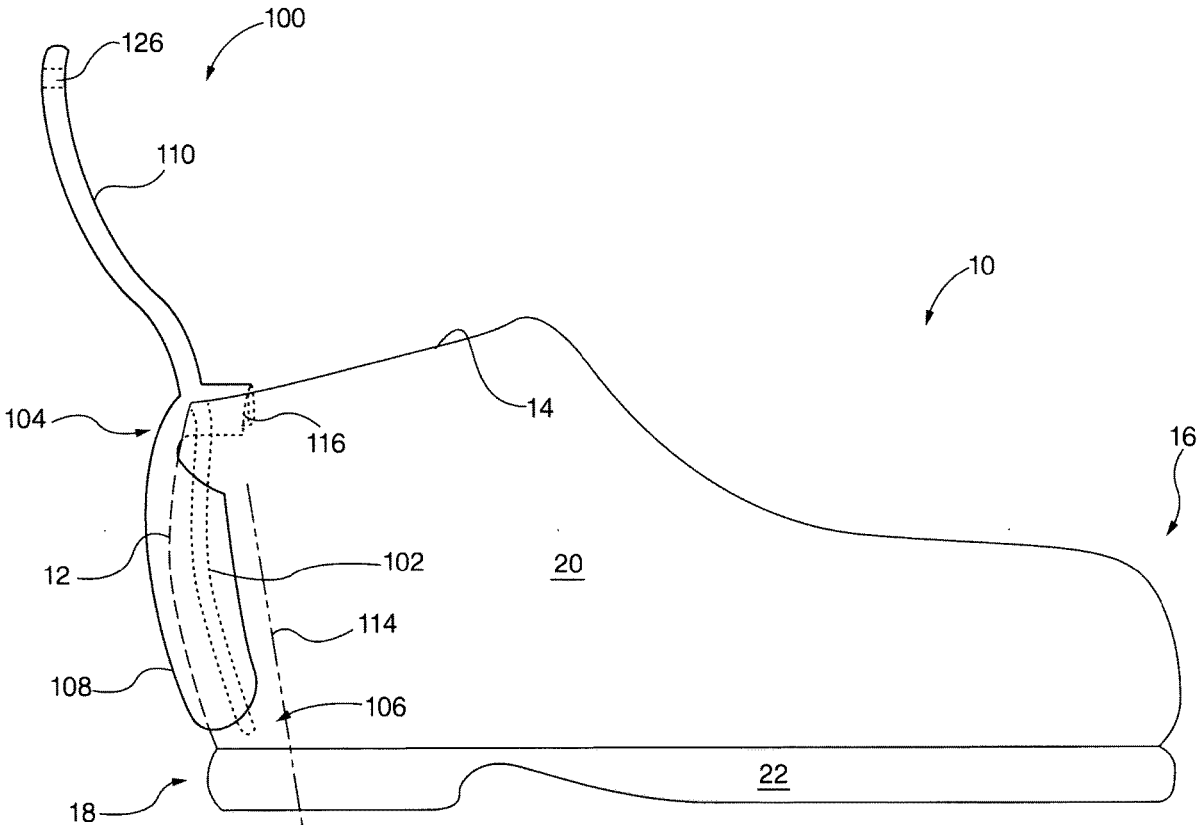
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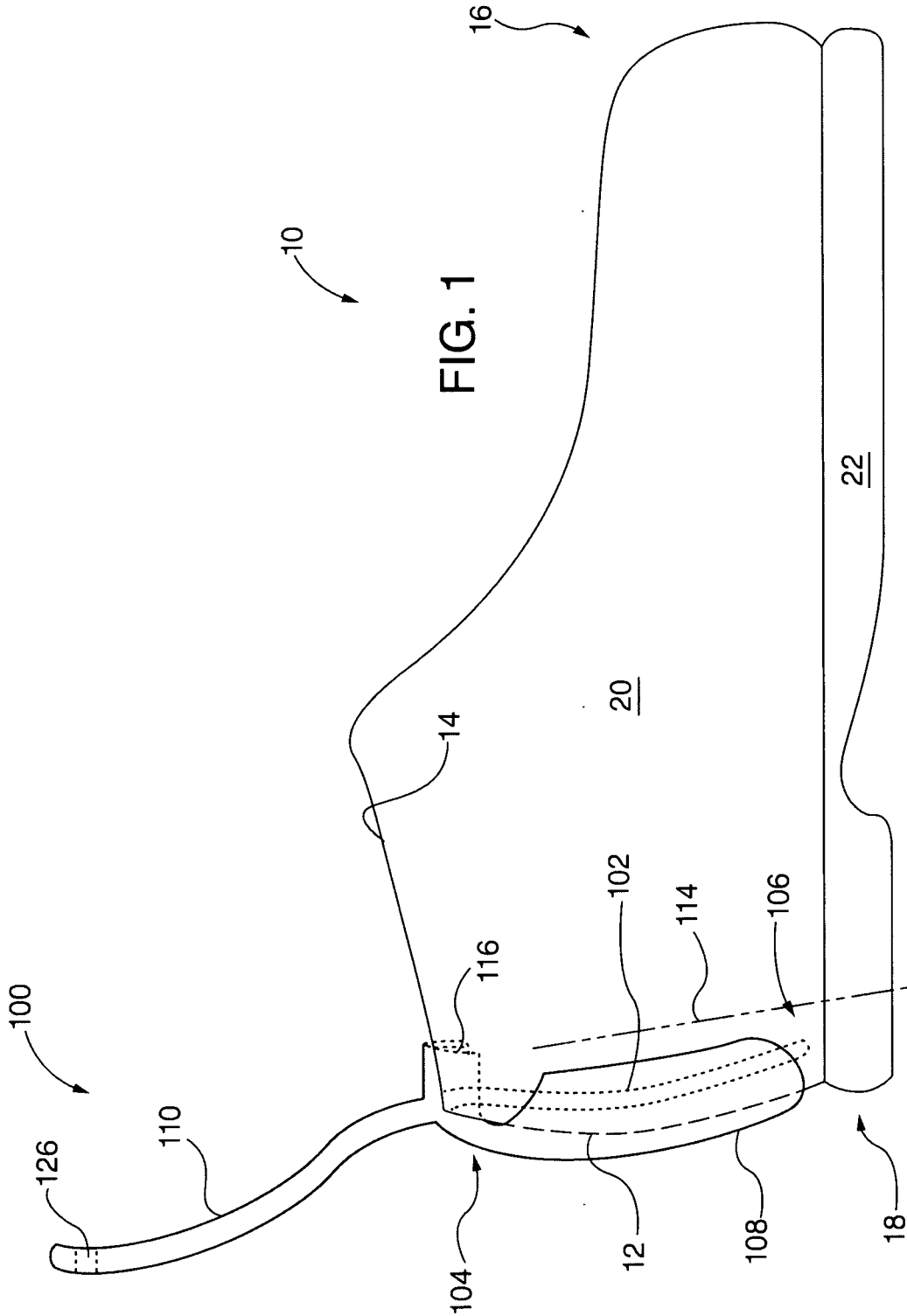
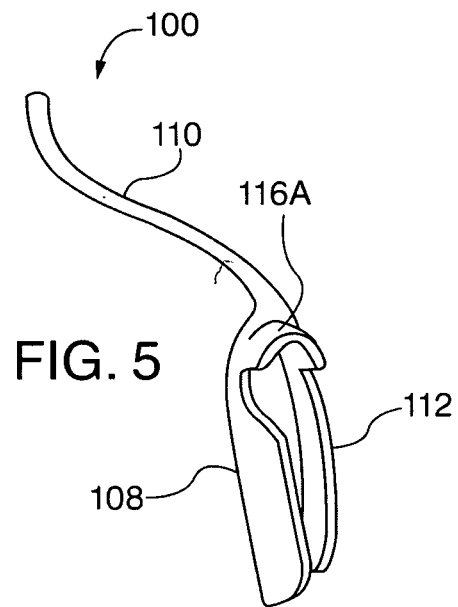
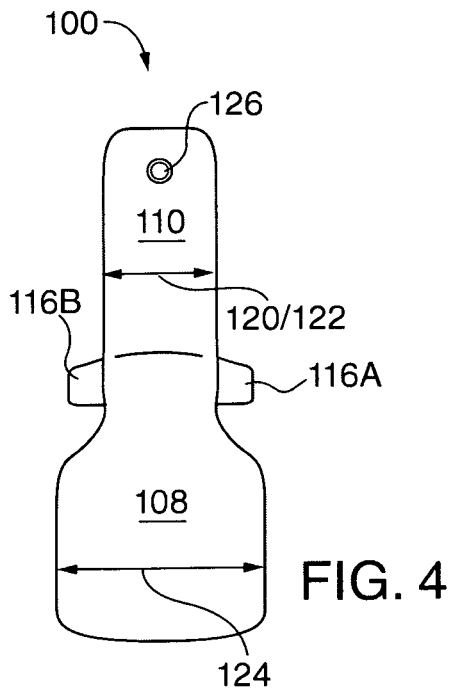
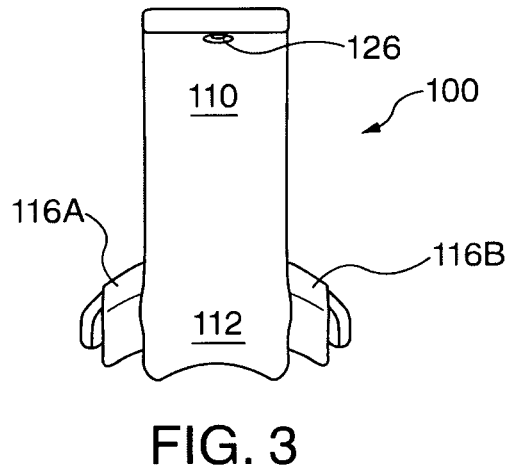
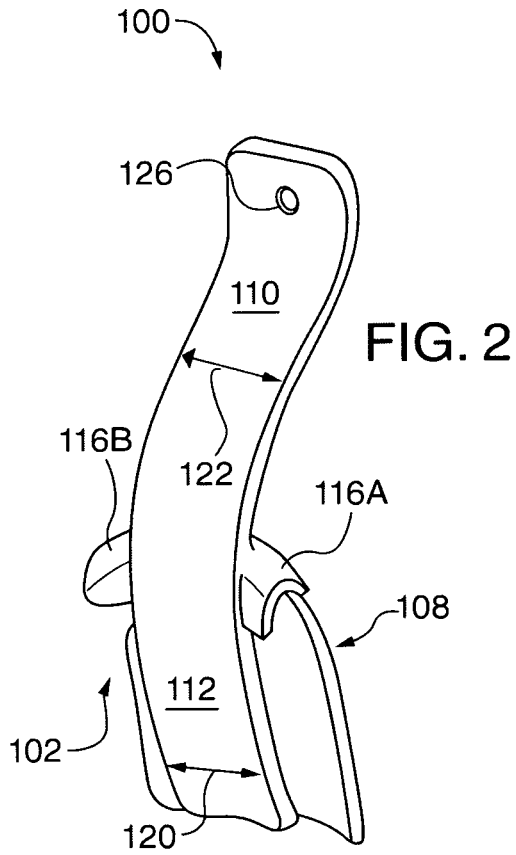


FIG. 1



**HANDS FREE SHOE HORN**

## REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

**[0001]** This application claims priority to Application Ser. No. 62/799,556, filed Jan. 31, 2019.

## FIELD OF THE INVENTION

**[0002]** The present invention relates to a shoe horn to assist in donning footwear such as shoes.

## BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

**[0003]** A shoe horn is an implement the purpose of which is to overcome sliding resistance encountered when a person attempts to insert his or her foot into footwear such as a shoe. A conventional shoe horn has a guide to guide insertion of the foot, and a handle. Ordinarily, the user must balance his or her body weight on one leg while inserting the foot of the other leg into the shoe. This can be awkward, uncomfortable, and may even lead to the user losing his or her balance.

## SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

**[0004]** The present invention overcomes awkwardness and balance issues by enabling the shoe horn to removably yet stably engage the shoe when donning the shoe. Notably, the user is not obliged to grasp the novel shoe horn when donning the shoe.

**[0005]** To these ends, the novel shoe horn includes a guide member for guiding the foot of the user into an opening of the shoe. A handle projects upwardly from the guide member to facilitate insertion and maneuvering of the shoe horn into position self-supported on the shoe. An entrapment member generally parallel to the guide member captures a heel wall of the shoe between the guide member and the entrapment member in sufficiently close fit to enable the shoe horn to remain coupled to the shoe in an operative position without the shoe horn being held by the user. The user may then slip his or her foot into the shoe with the shoe horn stably mounted on the shoe such that the user need not either hold the shoe horn or balance body weight on one leg while donning the shoe.

**[0006]** The shoe may be donned quickly and without awkward maneuvering of the foot or leg, and without losing balance.

**[0007]** The present invention provides improved elements and arrangements thereof by apparatus for the purposes described which is inexpensive, dependable, and fully effective in accomplishing its intended purposes.

**[0008]** These and other objects of the present invention will become readily apparent upon further review of the following specification and drawings.

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

**[0009]** Various objects, features, and attendant advantages of the present invention will become more fully appreciated as the same becomes better understood when considered in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which like reference characters designate the same or similar parts throughout the several views, and wherein:

**[0010]** FIG. 1 is a side environmental view of the shoe horn in an operative position installed on a shoe;

**[0011]** FIG. 2 is a front perspective view of a shoe horn similar to the shoe horn of FIG. 1;

**[0012]** FIG. 3 is a top plan view of a shoe horn similar to the shoe horn of FIG. 1;

**[0013]** FIG. 4 is a rear view of a shoe horn similar to the shoe horn of FIG. 1; and

**[0014]** FIG. 5 is a right side perspective view of a shoe horn similar to the shoe horn of FIG. 1.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

**[0015]** Referring first to FIG. 1, according to at least one aspect of the invention, there is shown a shoe horn **100** installed in an operative position on a shoe **10**. In the operative position, shoe horn **100** engages a heel wall **12** of shoe **10** with sufficient contact and grip to remain in the operative position so that a human user (not shown) may don shoe **10** by merely stepping into shoe **10**, with toes of the foot entering opening **14** of shoe **10** and progressing toward a toe **16** of shoe **10**.

**[0016]** Referring also to FIGS. 2-5, shoe horn **100** comprises a guide member **102** for guiding the foot of the user into shoe **10**. Guide member **102** comprises a proximal end **104** at an opening **14** of shoe **10** when shoe horn **100** is installed on shoe **10** and an opposed distal end **106** facing a heel **18** of shoe **100** when shoe horn **100** is installed on shoe **10** (e.g., as shown in FIG. 1). An entrapment member **108** is fixed to guide member **102** proximate proximal end **104** of guide member **102** and is configured such that a majority of a length of entrapment member **108** is parallel to guide member **102**. Entrapment member **108** and guide member **102** collectively surround heel wall **12** of shoe **10** on two opposed sides of heel wall **12** when shoe horn **100** is installed on shoe **10** in a sliding fit sufficiently close such that shoe horn **100** will be retained on shoe **10** in the absence of manual grasp by the user. A handle **110** is fixed to guide member **102** proximate proximal end **104** of guide member **102** and projects from guide member **102** in a direction away from entrapment member **108**.

**[0017]** Guide member **102** may be configured similarly to conventional guide members of conventional shoe horns (not shown). Notably, guide member **102** may include a smooth surface **112** (see FIGS. 2 and 3) enabling ready sliding of the foot of the user along guide member **102**. Also, guide member **102** may be curved as shown to match or track curvature of heel wall **12**.

**[0018]** For the purpose of this application, the terms proximal end **104** and distal end **106** may literally refer to the very ends of their associated portions of shoe horn **100**, or alternatively, may be understood to designate the very ends and also portions extending along guide member **102**, as context may dictate. Proximal end **104** and distal end **106** are labels for convenience, and should not be limited in scope to specific or discrete portions of guide member **102**. Similarly, guide member **102** and handle **110** are not to be interpreted to calling out discrete parts of shoe horn **100**. Rather, these are terms which functionally designate that portion of shoe horn **100** as context dictates. Note that guide member **102** and handle **110** may appear to visually form a single common member.

**[0019]** Length of entrapment member **108** will be understood to refer to that dimension of the latter extending along and generally parallel to an axis **114** in FIG. 1.

**[0020]** Referring to FIGS. 1-5, shoe horn **100** may further comprise a lateral stabilizer **116** projecting laterally from

guide member **102**, for opposing dislodging of shoehorn **100** from a longitudinal alignment with shoe **10** when shoehorn **100** is installed on shoe **10**.

[0021] It should be noted at this point that orientational terms such as laterally refer to the subject drawing as viewed by an observer. The drawing figures, particularly FIG. 1, depict their subject matter in orientations of normal use, which could obviously change with changes in posture and position of novel shoehorn **100** and shoe **10**. Therefore, orientational terms must be understood to provide semantic basis for purposes of description, and do not limit the invention or its component parts in any particular way.

[0022] Longitudinal alignment of shoehorn **100** and shoe **10** refers to the operative position shown in FIG. 1, but particularly refers to handle **110** (where aligned along axis **114** with guide member **102**) vertically oriented and not inclined to the right or left with respect to shoe **10** when shoe **10** rests on a horizontal surface. Lateral stabilizer **116** may extend entirely to respective right and left side walls (e.g., wall **20**) of shoe **10**, or alternatively, may fall short of actually contacting the side walls. As illustrated, lateral stabilizer **116** comprises a first wing **116A** projecting to a right side of guide member **102** when shoehorn **100** is installed on shoe **10**, and a second wing **116B** projecting to a left side of guide member **102** when shoehorn **100** is installed on shoe **10**. Of course, right and left refer to right and left sides of shoe **10**.

[0023] Unless otherwise indicated, the terms “first”, “second”, etc., are used herein merely as labels, and are not intended to impose ordinal, positional, or hierarchical requirements on the items to which these terms refer. Moreover, reference to, e.g., a “second” item does not either require or preclude the existence of, e.g., a “first” or lower-numbered item, and/or, e.g., a “third” or higher-numbered item.

[0024] In an embodiment, handle **110** may be configured to incline relative to a sole **22** (FIG. 1) of shoe **10** and to project away from toe **16** of shoe **10**. This configuration assures that handle **110** will not obstruct the user when attempting to insert his or her foot into shoe **10** with shoehorn **100** in the operative position.

[0025] In an embodiment, guide member **102** may be curved along a length thereof to conform to a curvature of heel wall **12** of shoe **10**. Length of guide member **102** is that dimension extending along axis **114**. This prevents guide member **102** from occupying more than the minimum necessary amount of space within shoe **10** when the foot of the user is being inserted into shoe **10**. Curvature of guide member **102** is best seen in FIGS. 1 and 2.

[0026] Shoehorn **100** may be fabricated from a form holding material such as a synthetic polymer or from metals. Form holding will be understood to signify that shoehorn **100** may be sufficiently pliable to bend under finger pressure or pressure of the foot as the latter is being inserted into shoe **10**, but is sufficiently rigid to maintain its configuration against spontaneous slumping or other deformation in the absence of external forces such as finger pressure or contact with the foot during insertion. This characteristic enables shoehorn **100** to hold the operative position of FIG. 1 in use.

[0027] In an embodiment, and as called out in FIG. 2, guide member **102** may have a first width **120** and handle **110** may have a second width **122** equal to first width **120** of guide member **102**. This may improve esthetics of shoehorn

**100** and facilitate fabrication by injection molding shoehorn **100** from a synthetic polymer.

[0028] In an embodiment, and as called out in FIG. 3, guide member **102** may have the first width **120** and entrapment member **108** may have a third width **124** greater than first width **120** of guide member **102**. These relationships enable entrapment member **108** to engage heel wall **12** (FIG. 1) securely.

[0029] In an embodiment, handle **110** may include a hole **126** for receiving a peg (not shown) for suspending shoehorn **100** from a vertical surface (such as a building wall, not shown).

[0030] Lateral stabilizer **116** may be internal to shoe **10** as shown and described, or alternatively, may span right and left walls **20** of shoe **10** and surround the right and left walls **20** from outside (this option is not shown).

[0031] While the present invention has been described in connection with what is considered the most practical and preferred embodiment, it is to be understood that the present invention is not to be limited to the disclosed arrangements, but is intended to cover various arrangements which are included within the spirit and scope of the broadest possible interpretation of the appended claims so as to encompass all modifications and equivalent arrangements which are possible.

I claim:

1. A shoehorn comprising:

a guide member for guiding a foot of a user into a shoe, the guide member comprising a proximal end at an opening of the shoe when the shoehorn is installed on the shoe and an opposed distal end facing a heel of the shoe when the shoehorn is installed on the shoe;

an entrapment member fixed to the guide member proximate the proximal end of the guide member and configured such that a majority of the length of the entrapment member is parallel to the guide member, the entrapment member and the guide member collectively surrounding a heel wall of the shoe on two opposed sides of the heel wall when the shoehorn is installed on the shoe in a sliding fit sufficiently close such that the shoehorn will be retained on the shoe in the absence of manual grasp by the user; and

a handle fixed to the guide member proximate the proximal end of the guide member and projecting from the guide member in a direction away from the entrapment member.

2. The shoehorn of claim 1, further comprising a lateral stabilizer projecting laterally from the guide member, for opposing dislodging of the shoehorn from a longitudinal alignment with the shoe when the shoehorn is installed on the shoe.

3. The shoehorn of claim 2, wherein the lateral stabilizer comprises a first wing projecting to a right side of the guide member when the shoehorn is installed on the shoe, and a second wing projecting to a left side of the guide member when the shoehorn is installed on the shoe.

4. The shoehorn of claim 1, wherein the handle is configured to incline relative to a sole of the shoe and to project away from a toe of the shoe.

5. The shoehorn of claim 1, wherein the guide member is curved along a length thereof to conform to a curvature of the heel of the shoe.

6. The shoehorn of claim 1, wherein the shoehorn is fabricated from a form holding material.

7. The shoehorn of claim 1, wherein the guide member has a first width and the handle has a second width equal to the first width of the guide member.

8. The shoehorn of claim 1, wherein the guide member has a first width and the entrapment member has a third width greater than the first width of the guide member.

9. The shoehorn of claim 1, wherein the handle includes a hole for receiving a peg for suspending the shoehorn from a vertical surface.

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