

United Nations Committee



United Nations Convention on the  
Rights of People with Disabilities

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# Our first review – 2017

## The government's answers to the UN Committee

July 2017



Easy Read



Office for  
Disability  
Issues

# Important

## Green writing

In this easy-read booklet we sometimes explain what words mean.

The first time we mention any of these words, it is in **bold green** writing. Then we write what the words mean in a blue box. If any of the words are used later in the booklet, we show them in **normal green** writing.

These words and what they mean are also in a Word list at the back of the booklet.

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# Contents

What this booklet is about.....	5
The questions and our answers.....	7
<b>What our government says</b> .....	7
<b>Purpose and obligations</b> .....	7
<b>Specific rights</b> .....	9
Fairness, and women and disabled children .....	9
Making people more aware of disability .....	11
Making life easier for disabled people .....	13
Fairness in law and justice .....	14
The right to be treated properly .....	16
Protecting people’s control over their own body .....	18
Freedom to travel and have a home country .....	18
Living independently and joining in local activities.....	19
Getting information.....	20
Education.....	21
Health.....	22
Work and jobs.....	24
Making sure people have enough money to live .....	25
Joining in the country’s political and public life .....	26
Spare time activities.....	27

- Specific obligations ..... 28
  - Collecting information ..... 28
  - Working with other countries..... 28
  - How the country has got this far..... 29
  - Last few words from the government..... 30
- Word list ..... 31

## What this booklet is about

When we say '**the Convention**', we mean the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

### The Convention

This is an agreement by governments to make sure disabled people have the same **rights** as other people in their country.

### Rights

These are rules about what people can expect from their government, and from other people and groups. For example, the right to be looked after when they are ill.

Our government agreed to **the Convention** in 2009.

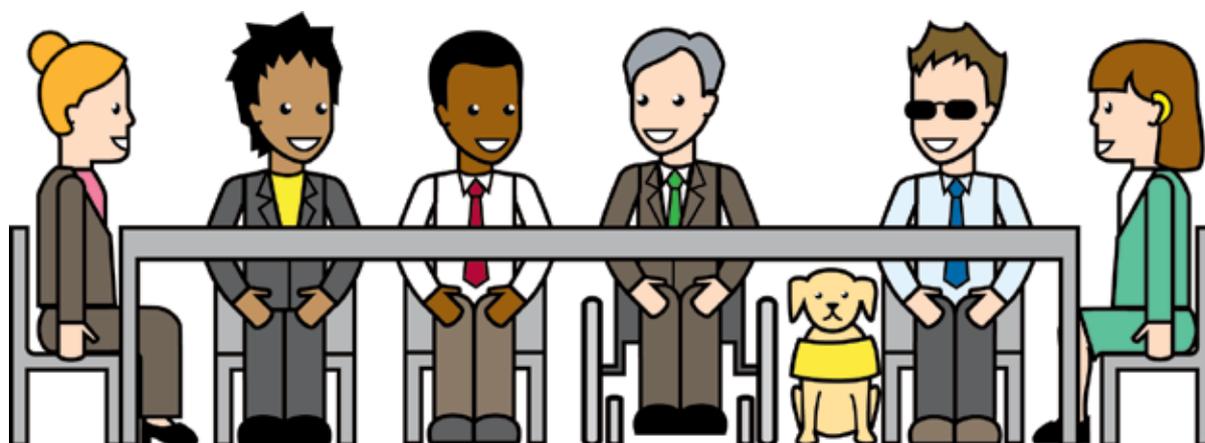


From time to time, a **Committee** checks what governments are doing to make sure that disabled people have the same **rights** as other people. This is called a review. **The Committee** does its review by asking a lot of questions. Governments have to answer these questions.

## The Committee

This is a group at the United Nations that checks what governments are doing to protect the rights of disabled people in their countries.

United Nations Committee



The **Committee** has sent our government a list of questions to find out what the **United Kingdom** is doing to make sure that disabled people have the same **rights** as other people.

## United Kingdom

This is the group name for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

This booklet shows our government's answers. Because this is a big booklet, you might only want to read what the government says about things that affect you. A list of all the things the government were asked about is on pages 3 and 4.

The government has sent a full report answering the list of questions to **the Committee**. The government will meet **the Committee** in August 2017 to answer more questions.

# The questions and our answers

## What our government says

We are happy to answer **the Committee's** questions about what we are doing to make sure that disabled people have the same **rights** as other people in the **United Kingdom**.

The government spoke to disabled people and their groups to let them know about the review. The government also asked disabled people what they thought was important.

This booklet shows what questions **the Committee** asked the government. It also shows the government's answers.

## Purpose and general obligations

**The Committee** asked our government what the **United Kingdom** is doing to protect the rights of disabled people.

The government said:

- We think human rights are important.
- We talk to disabled people and their groups. This helps us understand their ideas better. We also find out what other countries are doing to help disabled people.
- **The Convention** is not part of our law. This is normal, because we have not added other conventions to our law either.
- The Equality Act 2010 protects the rights of disabled people in England, Scotland and Wales.

- The Disability Discrimination Act protects the rights of disabled people in Northern Ireland.
- Our law says that ‘disabled people’ means people who have a disability or condition that:
  - affects their body or their mind.
  - lasts for more than a year.
  - stops them doing day-to-day things like eating, walking or keeping themselves clean.
- Our law protects disabled people from being treated unfairly.
- Our law says that **employers** and some other people or groups of people, like shop owners and bus companies, may need to change their buildings or the way they do things to make it easier for disabled people to get a job, buy things or use services.

### Employers

These are people or companies that pay other people to do work for them.

- If we want to do something new, or change the way we do things, we give people the chance to tell us what they think. This includes disabled people and their groups.
- We want everyone to have good services when they are ill. This includes services for people at the end of their lives. We have set up a group to look at giving better services to people with learning disabilities at the end of their lives.

## Specific rights

### Fairness, and women and disabled children

The Committee asked our government what the United Kingdom is doing to protect women and disabled children, and disabled people who are also in an **ethnic minority** group.

### Ethnic minority

This means people who, because of their race, colour, culture, language or nationality, are not the same as most people in a country. For example, people whose families came from the Caribbean, Africa, Pakistan, China and Bangladesh.



The government said:

- Our Equality Act protects people from unfairness because of their age, sex, disability or **ethnic minority** group. This includes unfairness at work, in schools and colleges, in shops, on buses, and in getting services from local councils.

- The Equality Act also has rules about making changes to buildings to make them easier for disabled people to use. Some of the rules are not law yet, but we have started work to see if they should now become law.
- Plans are in place to protect women and girls from bad treatment. This includes women and girls with disabilities. In Scotland these plans include making the law stronger.
- Families on low incomes can get government money, such as tax credits, grants and disability benefits. And we offer free nursery places for very young disabled children.
- Our law tells schools they must have a plan to fight bullying.



- The law also tells schools to treat disabled children fairly. This means they must be fair when giving places to children, and give them a good education.
- We think disabled children and their families should have a say in decisions about their lives and care. The Children and Families Act 2014 tells local councils to include children and families when talking about their support needs.

## Making people more aware of disability

The Committee asked our government what the United Kingdom is doing to deal with the bad feelings some people have about disabled people.

The Committee also asked about how these bad feelings affect people with learning disabilities, mental health conditions and older people with **dementia**.

### Dementia

This is a disability that affects older people and happens when the brain is not working properly, usually because of old age.

The government said:

- We are doing many things to change the bad feelings some people have about disabled people.
- Our Disability Confident scheme helps employers who give jobs to disabled people and health conditions.
- Teachers are trained to identify **children with autism**.

### Children with autism

These children usually have a very good memory but find it hard to mix with and speak to other people. Some can also have trouble using their imagination, and can find it hard to be in school.

- Railway and bus workers are trained to be aware of the needs of disabled people.



- Health and social care workers have training to help them support people with mental health conditions or learning disabilities.
- We are paying for work being done to make people aware of **dementia**, and we support the Dementia Friends scheme which tells people about **dementia**.
- We offer training to judges about the best ways to talk to disabled people. For example, some disabled people do not understand very long words.

## Making life easier for disabled people

The Committee asked our government what the United Kingdom is doing to make it easier for disabled people to move about in places like buildings.

The Committee also asked what our government is doing to make it easier for disabled people to get information.

The government said:

- We want to make it easier for disabled people to move about in buildings. The rules for new buildings tell builders to make sure their buildings are easy for disabled people to use. If they do not, local councils can tell them to change it.
- We are asking building designers to think about how disabled people will use their buildings and take this into account in their designs.
- We are making it easier for disabled people to use buses and trains. For example:
  - buses should have information about their routes for deaf or blind people.
  - taxi drivers must help disabled people to use their services.
  - train stations are being changed to make them easier for disabled people to use.
- We are making it easier for disabled people to use our websites.

## Fairness in law and justice

The Committee asked our government about how the United Kingdom makes sure that the law respects the beliefs, choices and feelings of disabled people.

The government said:

- The Mental Capacity Act 2005 has rules about how disabled people should be supported to make their own decisions. The Act also has rules about when a decision can be made for someone who cannot make their own decisions.
- If a disabled person is chosen to be on a **jury**, the court must give help to that person if it is needed. But if a disabled person needs a support worker or talks using **sign language**, they cannot be on a **jury**.



## Jury

This is a group of 12 people who are chosen by a court to make the decision about someone's guilt in serious criminal cases.

## Sign language

This language can be used by people who cannot hear. Instead of speaking, they use their hands to make signs that other people can understand.

- We can help disabled people to pay for their lawyers if they have to go to court. This is called civil legal aid. It can be used if the person thinks they have been treated unfairly, if they are unhappy with a decision made about their care, or if they need help to tell their lawyer about their case.

## The right to be treated properly

The Committee asked our government what the United Kingdom is doing to protect disabled people from being forced to live away from home.

The Committee also asked what is being done to protect disabled people from bad treatment and hate crimes.

The government said:

- We want disabled people to **live independently** and be part of their local area. We want them to be able to choose where they live, and how they get the support they need.

### Living independently

This means people having choice and control over the care and support services they need to live the way they want to.

- The Mental Capacity Act 2005 has rules about what must happen before someone can make a decision that affects a disabled person. We are checking if we need to make changes to those rules. Northern Ireland's rules are being made better.
- Disabled people that are cared for at home must be treated well. We have new laws that say that disabled people must not be treated badly in their home.
- Some disabled people die while they are in prison or using health services. If this happens, we take action to find out what went wrong, and use this to stop it happening again.

- We do not want force to be used to control disabled people unless this is needed for safety reasons. We have made stronger rules to stop this happening in places like prisons, hospitals and children's homes.
- We have laws to protect disabled people from hate crime. Action is being taken in all parts of the [United Kingdom](#) to stop hate crimes.



- We have a plan to reduce all hate crimes, including hate crime against disabled people. More people are telling the police if they have been a victim of hate crime, and the police and the courts are getting more training about hate crime.
- The governments in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland are also tackling hate crime. They are doing these things:
  - They are helping to stop hate crimes happening.
  - They are telling people about hate crime so that they know what it means.
  - They are supporting the victims of hate crimes and the local area where the victims live.

## Protecting people's control over their own body

The Committee asked whether anyone in the United Kingdom can make a decision forcing disabled people to have medical treatments. It asked if women or girls can be forced to have an operation that would stop them having children in the future.

The government said that everyone should agree before they are medically examined or treated. If a disabled person cannot make that decision, we have rules that must be followed before someone else can decide for them.

## Freedom to travel and have a home country

The Committee asked our government if there were any plans to remove the **reservation** that stops foreign people travelling to the United Kingdom.

### Reservation

This is when a government does not want part of the Convention to apply to their country.

The government said that it wants to make its own decisions about people travelling to the United Kingdom.

## Living independently and joining in local activities

The Committee asked our government what the United Kingdom is doing to help disabled people to live independently, such as living in their own home.

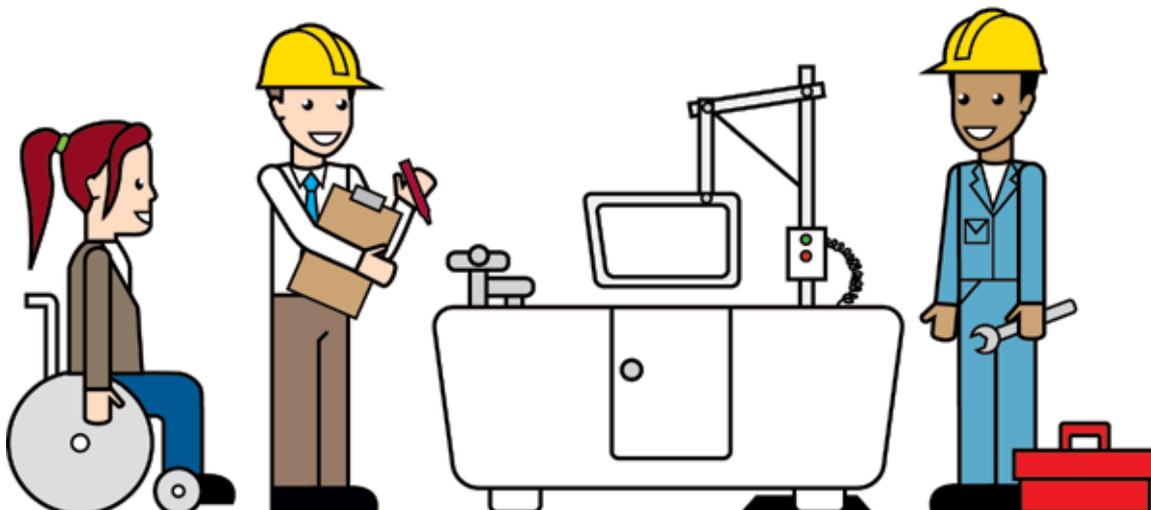
The government said:

- In the United Kingdom, disabled people can choose how they live and how they receive the care they need.
- More disabled people are being helped to live independently. Most can get the care they need in their own home. But if the person needs extra care that cannot be given in their own home, we have care homes where they can live.

### Care homes

These are places where people live if their care needs cannot be given in their own home.

- Changes can be made to a house to make it easier for a disabled person to live at home. People can get help with the cost of making these changes.



## Getting information

The Committee asked our government what help the United Kingdom gives to people who cannot hear or cannot hear well so that they can join in day-to-day things like going to school.

The government said:

- The Equality Act 2010 has rules that say that people who cannot hear or cannot hear well should get help. For example, they can get help to pay for someone who knows sign language to help them speak to their doctor.
- Most children who cannot hear or cannot hear well go to the same schools as other children. They get extra help at school. For example, there are teachers who have had special training to teach children who cannot hear or cannot hear well.
- In Northern Ireland, work is being done to share information about people who cannot hear or cannot hear well. More people are also being trained to use sign languages.
- Scotland has a British Sign Language Act that is making more people aware of sign language. For example, sign language is taught in schools. Scotland also wants more sign language interpreters who are experts in things like health and justice.



## Education

The Committee asked our government questions about what type of schools disabled children go to in the United Kingdom. They also asked how these children choose their school, and what help is given to students with disabilities.

The government said:

- Disabled children may go to a special school, or they may go to the same schools as other children. The children's parents help decide which type of school is best for them.
- We think it is important that people can choose which type of school their child goes to. Because of this, we have a reservation that allows us to keep special schools. We have no plans to remove this reservation.
- Disabled children that go to the same schools as other children get extra help. For example, trained teachers and helpers who understand about having a disability.
- If a student needs special help while at college, they may be able to get our Disabled Students' Allowance.

## Health

The Committee asked our government questions about the kind of support the United Kingdom gives to disabled people.

The questions asked:

- how a decision is made to give medical treatment to a disabled person.
- what help is given to disabled people to go to see their doctor or to go to hospital.
- what kind of training is given to doctors and nurses to help them treat disabled people.

The government said:

- We have a National Health Service that helps all people, including disabled people. We have checks in place to make sure this happens.



- Everyone should agree before they are medically treated, including disabled people. If a disabled person cannot make that decision, we have rules that must be followed before someone else can decide for them.
- We have rules for all health service buildings that say what disabled people should expect when they use the buildings. For example, they should be given help if they come to the building in a wheelchair.
- We have a scheme called Disability Matters that helps people learn more about supporting disabled people. The scheme is used by people who give care to disabled people.
- Women with disabilities can get information about sexual health and having a baby. In Scotland and Wales, work is being done to make this information better and to tell people about the help they can get.
- If a person is expected to die, they can decide if they want doctors to try to keep them alive. If the person is not able to decide for themselves, their families and friends can help make this decision. We have rules that must be followed before someone else can decide for them.
- Disabled people should never feel so bad that they want to kill themselves. Lots of things are being done in the [United Kingdom](#) to help stop all people killing themselves, including disabled people.

## Work and jobs

The Committee asked our government what the United Kingdom is doing to make sure disabled people are treated fairly at work.

The government said:

- The Equality Act 2010 has rules to protect disabled people from being treated unfairly at work or when they apply for a job. Disabled people can take action if an employer treats them unfairly.
- Employers should give workers everything they need to do a job. For a disabled person this might include special equipment if this is needed for the job. Our Access to Work scheme can sometimes help employers pay for these things.



- All parts of the United Kingdom are working hard to help more disabled people to get a job and then keep it. We have asked employers to give more jobs to disabled people.
- Disabled people can get training to learn the things that are needed to do a job.

## Making sure people have enough money to live

The Committee asked our government about what money disabled people can get to help them pay for things like food and rent.

The government said:

- We give money to disabled people to help them pay for things they need. These benefits include Personal Independence Payment and Disability Living Allowance.
- There are rules about who can get benefits. For example, to get Employment and Support Allowance, a person needs to show that they have a disability or health condition that makes it hard for them to work and do day-to-day things.
- We have made changes to some benefits, but we have included protection for some groups of people, including some disabled people.
- When any part of the United Kingdom wants to make a change to their plans, checks are made to see if the changes could unfairly affect different groups of people. One of these groups is disabled people.
- We give help to disabled people who are parents, and to parents whose children have disabilities. We want to help their children do the best they can in life, For example, we may help parents decide about the child's education or health.

## Joining in the country's political and public life

The Committee asked our government about what the United Kingdom does to help disabled people **vote** in **elections**.

### Vote

This is what people do to choose who they want to help run the country or their local council. Each person aged 18 or more can **vote**. People aged 16 or more can **vote** in some **elections** in Scotland. The person or group who gets the most **votes** wins.

### Election

This is the way people are chosen to help run the country or their local council. On a certain day, people **vote** for the person they want to win. The person or group that gets the most **votes** wins the **election**.

The government said that disabled people can **vote** like other people to choose who is in charge of running the country.

Disabled people can get help to do this. For example:

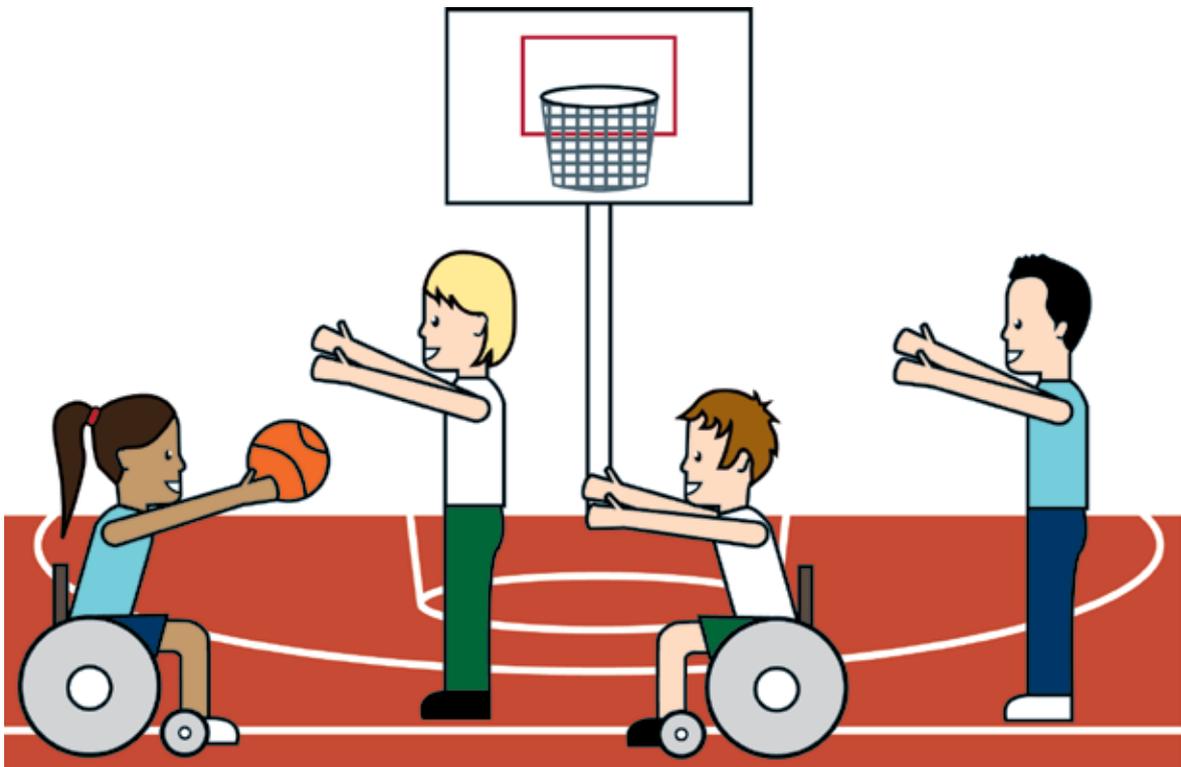
- They can vote by post if they cannot get to the place where people **vote**.
- They can ask for someone else to **vote** for them.
- People who cannot see or cannot see well can get help when they go to the place where people **vote**.

## Spare time activities

The Committee asked our government about how the United Kingdom involves disabled people in sport.

The government said:

- More disabled people are being supported to take part in sport.



- We want the people that run sports clubs to do what they can to get disabled people to take part in sport.
- Sports grounds are being built or changed to make it easier for disabled people to watch sport.

## Specific obligations

### Collecting information

Our government said:

- The governments in the **United Kingdom** collect information about how disabled people live their lives. People use the information to see if disabled people are treated fairly. For example, governments collect information about:
  - what happens to disabled people when they use services like education and health.
  - what other people think about disabled people.

### Working with other countries

Our government said:

- We will think about what leaving the **European Union** – some people call this Brexit – will mean for disabled people. The same rules and laws that help disabled people will apply after leaving the **European Union**.

#### **European Union**

This is a group of most of the countries in Europe.

- We help disabled people in other countries to have better lives.

## How the country has got this far

Our government said:

- We have an Office for Disability Issues that works with our Minister for Disabled People.
- The people who make and change our laws and plans think about how their work might affect disabled people. They also listen to what disabled people tell them.



- Groups look at how the governments in the [United Kingdom](#) make sure everyone is treated fairly, including disabled people. They listen to disabled people and tell [the Committee](#) what they have heard. The groups are:
  - Equality and Human Rights Commission.
  - Scottish Human Rights Commission.
  - Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission.
  - Northern Ireland Equality Commission.

## Last few words from the government

Our government said:

- Our replies to [the Committee's](#) questions show that lots is being done to support disabled people in the [United Kingdom](#).
- We have a meeting with [the Committee](#) to talk more about this in August 2017.

# Word list

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## Employers

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## Ethnic minority

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## European Union

This is a group of most of the countries in Europe.....28

## Jury

This is a group of 12 people who are chosen by a court to make the decision about someone’s guilt in serious criminal cases .....15

## Living independently

This means people having choice and control over the care and support services they need to live the way they want to .....16

## Reservation

This is when a government does not want part of the **Convention** to apply to their country .....17

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These are rules about what people can expect from their government, and from other people and groups. For example, the right to be looked after when they are ill..... 5

## Sign language

This language can be used by people who cannot hear. Instead of speaking, they use their hands to make signs that other people can understand .....15

## The Committee

This is a group at the United Nations that checks what governments are doing to protect the rights of people with disabilities in their countries ..... 6

## The Convention

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## United Kingdom

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## Vote

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