

Mickey Mouse

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Mickey Mouse is a funny animal cartoon character and the official mascot of The Walt Disney Company. He was created by Walt Disney and Ub Iwerks at the Walt Disney Studios in 1928. An anthropomorphic mouse who typically wears red shorts, large yellow shoes, and white gloves, Mickey has become one of the most recognizable cartoon characters in the world.

Mickey first was seen in a single test screening (*Plane Crazy*). Mickey officially debuted in the short film *Steamboat Willie* (1928), one of the first sound cartoons. He went on to appear in over 130 films, including *The Band Concert* (1935), *Brave Little Tailor* (1938), and *Fantasia* (1940). Mickey appeared primarily in short films, but also occasionally in feature-length films. Nine of Mickey's cartoons were nominated for the Academy Award for Best Animated Short Film, one of which, *Lend a Paw*, won the award in 1942. In 1978, Mickey became the first cartoon character to have a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

Beginning in 1930, Mickey has also been featured extensively as a comic strip character. His self-titled newspaper strip, drawn primarily by Floyd Gottfredson, ran for 45 years. Mickey has also appeared in comic books and in television series such as *The Mickey Mouse Club* (1955–1996) and others. He also appears in other media such as video games as well as merchandising, and is a meetable character at the Disney parks.

Mickey generally appears alongside his girlfriend Minnie Mouse, his pet dog Pluto, his friends Donald Duck, and Goofy, and his nemesis Pete, among others (see Mickey Mouse universe). Originally characterized as a mischievous antihero, Mickey's increasing popularity led to his being rebranded as an everyman, usually seen as an ever cheerful, yet shy role model. In 2009, Disney began to rebrand the character again by putting less emphasis on his pleasant, cheerful side and reintroducing the more mischievous and adventurous sides of his personality, beginning with the video game *Epic Mickey*.^[5]

Mickey Mouse



| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| First appearance | <i>Steamboat Willie</i> (1928) ^[1] |
| Created by | Walt Disney, Ub Iwerks |
| Voiced by | Walt Disney (1928–47) (2013)-Get a Horse! Jimmy MacDonald (1947–77) Les Perkins (1986–87) ^[2] Wayne Allwine (1977–2009) ^[3] Bret Iwan (2009–) Chris Diamantopoulos (2013-) ^[4] |
| Developed by | Floyd Gottfredson, Fred Moore |
| Information | |
| Species | Mouse |
| Gender | Male |
| Family | Mickey Mouse family |
| Significant other(s) | Minnie Mouse |
| Pet dog | Pluto |

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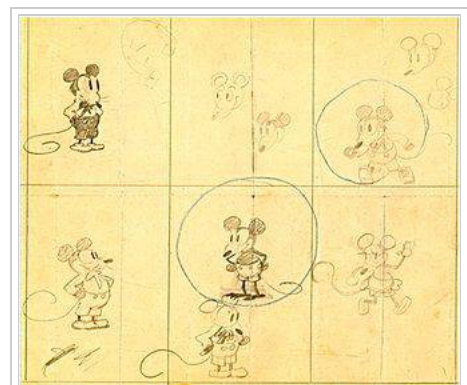
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Origin

"I only hope that we never lose sight of one thing – that it was all started by a mouse."

—Walt Disney, *Disneyland*; October 27, 1954

Mickey Mouse was created as a replacement for Oswald the Lucky Rabbit, an earlier cartoon character created by the Disney studio for Charles Mintz of Universal Studios.^[6] In the spring of 1928, with the series going strong, Disney asked Mintz for an increase in the budget. But Mintz instead demanded that Walt take a 20 percent budget cut, and as leverage, he reminded Disney that Universal owned the character, and revealed that he had already signed most of Disney's current employees to his new contract. Angrily, Disney refused the deal and returned to produce the final Oswald cartoons he contractually owed Mintz. Disney was dismayed at the betrayal by his staff, but determined to restart from scratch. The new Disney Studio initially consisted of animator Ub Iwerks and a loyal apprentice artist, Les Clark, who together with Wilfred Jackson were among the few who remained loyal to Walt. One lesson Disney learned from the experience was to thereafter always make sure that he owned all rights to the characters produced by his company.



Concept art of Mickey from early 1928; the sketches are the earliest known drawings of the character, from the collection of The Walt Disney Family Museum.

In the spring of 1928, Disney asked Ub Iwerks to start drawing up new character ideas. Iwerks tried sketches of various animals, such as dogs and cats, but none of these appealed to Disney. A female cow and male horse were also rejected. They would later turn up as Clarabelle Cow and Horace Horsecollar. (A male frog, also rejected, would later show up in Iwerks' own *Flip the Frog* series.)^[7] Walt Disney got the inspiration for Mickey Mouse from a tame mouse at his desk at Laugh-O-Gram Studio in Kansas City, Missouri.^[8] In 1925, Hugh Harman drew some sketches of mice around a photograph of Walt Disney. These inspired Ub Iwerks to create a new mouse character for Disney.^[7] "Mortimer Mouse" had been Disney's original name for the character before his wife, Lillian, convinced him to change it, and ultimately Mickey Mouse came to be.^{[9][10]} Actor Mickey Rooney has claimed that, during his Mickey McGuire days, he met cartoonist Walt Disney at the Warner Brothers studio, and that Disney was inspired to name Mickey Mouse after him.^[11]

Design

Ub Iwerks designed Mickey's body out of circles in order to make the character simple to animate. Disney employees John Hench and Marc Davis believed that this design was part of Mickey's success – it made him more dynamic and appealing to audiences. Mickey's circular design is most noticeable in his ears, which in traditional animation, always appear circular no matter which way Mickey faces. This made Mickey easily recognizable to audiences and made his ears an unofficial personal trademark. Even today, the symbol "☹" is often used by the Disney Company to represent Mickey (see Hidden Mickey). This later created a dilemma for toy creators who had to recreate a three dimensional Mickey. In animation in the 1940s Mickey's ears were animated in perspective.

Animator Fred Moore would later redesign Mickey's body away from its circular design to a pear-shape design. Colleague Ward Kimball praised Moore for being the first animator to break from Mickey's "rubber hose, round circle" design. Although Moore himself was nervous at first about changing Mickey, Walt Disney liked the new design and told Moore "that's the way I want Mickey to be drawn from now on."

Each of Mickey's hands has only three fingers and a thumb. Disney said that this was both an artistic and financial decision, explaining "Artistically five digits are too many for a mouse. His hand would look like a bunch of bananas. Financially, not having an extra finger in each of 45,000 drawings that make up a six and one half minute short has saved the Studio millions." In the film *The Opry House* (1929), Mickey was given his white gloves which were a simple way of contrasting his naturally black hands against his black body.

Mickey's eyes, as drawn in *Plane Crazy* and *The Gallopin' Gaucho*, were large and white and defined by black outlines. In *Steamboat Willie* the black outlines were removed, although the upper edges still contrasted with his head. Mickey's eyes were later re-imagined as only consisting of the small black dots which were his pupils, while what were the upper edges of his eyes became a hairline. This is evident only when Mickey blinks. Fred Moore later redesigned the eyes to be small white eyes with pupils and gave his face a Caucasian skin tone instead of plain white. This new Mickey first appeared in 1938 on the cover of a party program, and in animation the following year with the release of *The Pointer*.^[12] Mickey is sometimes given eyebrows as seen in *The Simple Things* (1953) and in the comic strip, although he does not have eyebrows in his most recent appearances.

Besides Mickey's gloves and shoes, he typically wears only a pair of shorts with two large buttons in the front. Although the animated Mickey was seen only in black and white for over seven years,^[13] print images confirmed that the shorts were red. When Mickey is not wearing his red shorts, he is often still wearing red clothing. This includes a red bandmaster coat (*The Band Concert*, *The Mickey Mouse Club*), red overalls (*Clock Cleaners*, *Boat Builders*), a red cloak (*Fantasia*, *Fun and Fancy Free*), a red coat (*Squatter's Rights*, *Mickey's*

Christmas Carol), and a red shirt (*Mickey Down Under*, *The Simple Things*).

Animation history

See also: Mickey Mouse film series

Debut (1928)

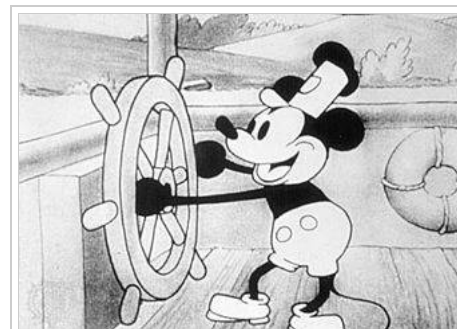
Disney had Ub Iwerks secretly begin animating a new cartoon while still under contract with Universal. The cartoon was co-directed by Walt Disney and Ub Iwerks. Iwerks was the main animator for the short, and reportedly spent six weeks working on it. In fact, Iwerks was the main animator for every Disney short released in 1928 and 1929. Hugh Harman and Rudolf Ising also assisted Disney during those years. They had already signed their contracts with Charles Mintz, but he was still in the process of forming his new studio and so for the time being they were still employed by Disney. This short would be the last they animated under this somewhat awkward situation.^[14]

Mickey was first seen in a test screening of the cartoon short *Plane Crazy*, on May 15, 1928, but it failed to impress the audience and to add insult to injury, Walt could not find a distributor. Though understandably disappointed, Walt went on to produce a second Mickey short, *The Gallopin' Gaucho*, which was also not released for lack of a distributor.^[15]

Steamboat Willie was first released on November 18, 1928, in New York. It was co-directed by Walt Disney and Ub Iwerks. Iwerks again served as the head animator, assisted by Johnny Cannon, Les Clark, Wilfred Jackson and Dick Lundy. This short was intended as a parody of Buster Keaton's *Steamboat Bill Jr.*, first released on May 12 of the same year. Although it was the third Mickey cartoon produced, it was the first to find a distributor, and thus is considered by The Disney Company as Mickey's debut. *Willie* featured changes to Mickey's appearance (in particular, simplifying his eyes to large dots) that established his look for later cartoons and in numerous Walt Disney films.^{[16][17]}

The cartoon was not the first cartoon to feature a soundtrack connected to the action. Fleischer Studios, headed by brothers Dave and Max Fleischer, had already released a number of sound cartoons using the DeForest system in the mid-1920s. However, these cartoons did not keep the sound synchronized throughout the film. For *Willie*, Disney had the sound recorded with a click track that kept the musicians on the beat. This precise timing is apparent during the "Turkey in the Straw" sequence, when Mickey's actions exactly match the accompanying instruments. Animation historians have long debated who had served as the composer for the film's original music. This role has been variously attributed to Wilfred Jackson, Carl Stalling and Bert Lewis, but identification remains uncertain. Walt Disney himself was voice actor for both Mickey and Minnie, and would remain the source of Mickey's voice through 1946 for theatrical cartoons. Jimmy MacDonald took over the role in 1946, but Walt provided Mickey's voice again from 1955 to 1959 for *The Mickey Mouse Club* television series on ABC.

Audiences at the time of *Steamboat Willie*'s release were reportedly impressed by the use of sound for comedic purposes. Sound films or "talkies" were still considered innovative. The first feature-length movie with dialogue sequences, *The Jazz Singer* starring Al Jolson, was released on October 6, 1927. Within a year of its success, most United States movie theaters had installed sound film equipment. Walt Disney apparently intended to take advantage of this new trend and, arguably, managed to succeed. Most other cartoon studios were still producing



Mickey's first appearance in *Steamboat Willie* (1928).

silent products and so were unable to effectively act as competition to Disney. As a result Mickey would soon become the most prominent animated character of the time. Walt Disney soon worked on adding sound to both *Plane Crazy* and *The Gallopin' Gaucho* (which had originally been silent releases) and their new release added to Mickey's success and popularity. A fourth Mickey short, *The Barn Dance*, was also put into production; however, Mickey does not actually speak until *The Karnival Kid* in 1929 when his first spoken words were "Hot dogs, Hot dogs!" After *Steamboat Willie* was released, Mickey became a close competitor to Felix the Cat, and his popularity would grow as he was continuously featured in sound cartoons. By 1929, Felix would lose popularity among theater audiences, and Pat Sullivan decided to produce all future Felix cartoons in sound as a result.^[18] Unfortunately, audiences did not respond well to Felix's transition to sound and by 1930, Felix had faded from the screen.^[19]

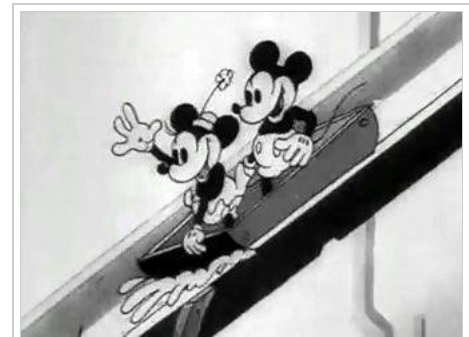
Black and white films (1929–1935)

In Mickey's early films he was often characterized not as a hero, but as an ineffective young suitor to Minnie Mouse. *The Barn Dance* (March 14, 1929) is the first time in which Mickey is turned down by Minnie in favor of Pete.

The Opry House (March 28, 1929) was the first time in which Mickey wore his white gloves. Mickey wears them in almost all of his subsequent appearances and many other characters followed suit. Supposedly one reason for adding the white gloves was to allow audiences to distinguish the characters' hands when they appeared against their bodies, as both were black. The three lines on the back of Mickey's gloves represent darts in the gloves' fabric extending from between the digits of the hand, typical of glove design of the era.

When the Cat's Away (April 18, 1929), essentially a remake of the *Alice Comedy*, "Alice Rattled by Rats", was an unusual appearance for Mickey. Although Mickey and Minnie still maintained their anthropomorphic characteristics, they were depicted as the size of regular mice and living with a community many other mice as pests in a home. Mickey and Minnie would later appear the size of regular humans in their own setting. In appearances with real humans, Mickey has been shown to be about two to three feet high.^[20] The next Mickey short was also unusual. *The Barnyard Battle* (April 25, 1929) was the only film to depict Mickey as a soldier and also the first to place him in combat. *The Karnival Kid* (1929) was the first time Mickey spoke. Before this he had only whistled, laughed, and grunted. His first words were "Hot dogs! Hot dogs!" said while trying to sell hot dogs at a carnival. *Mickey's Follies* (1929) introduced the song "Minnie's Yoo-Hoo" which would become the theme song for *Mickey Mouse* films for the next several years. The "Minnie's Yoo-Hoo" song sequence was also later reused with different background animation as its own special short shown only at the commencement of 1930s theater-based Mickey Mouse Clubs.^{[21][22]} Mickey's dog Pluto first appeared as Mickey's pet in *The Moose Hunt* (1931) after previously appearing as Minnie's dog "Rover" in *The Picnic* (1930).

The Cactus Kid (April 11, 1930) was the last film to be animated by Ub Iwerks at Disney. Shortly before the release of the film, Iwerks left to start his own studio, bankrolled by Disney's then-distributor Pat Powers. Powers and Disney had a falling out over money due Disney from the distribution deal. It was in response to losing the right to distribute Disney's cartoons that Powers made the deal with Iwerks, who had long harbored a desire to head his own studio. The departure is considered a turning point in Mickey's career, as well as that of Walt Disney. Walt lost the man who served as his closest colleague and confidant since 1919. Mickey lost the man responsible for his original design and for the direction and/or animation of several of the shorts released till this point. Advertising for the early Mickey Mouse cartoons credited them as "A Walt Disney Comic, drawn by



Mickey with Minnie Mouse in *Building a Building* (1933).

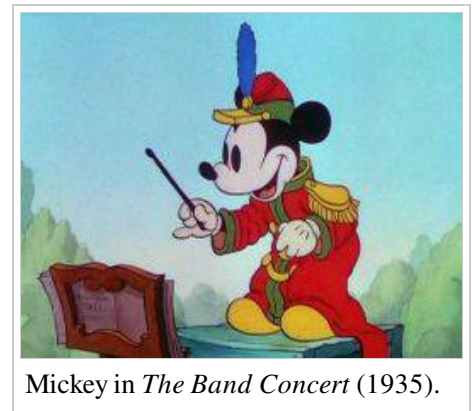
Ub Iwerks". Later Disney Company reissues of the early cartoons tend to credit Walt Disney alone.

Disney and his remaining staff continued the production of the Mickey series, and he was able to eventually find a number of animators to replace Iwerks. As the Great Depression progressed and Felix the Cat faded from the movie screen, Mickey's popularity would rise, and by 1932 The Mickey Mouse Club would have one million members.^[23] At the 5th Academy Awards in 1932, Mickey received his first Academy Award nomination, received for *Mickey's Orphans* (1931). Walt Disney also received an honorary Academy Award for the creation of Mickey Mouse. Despite being eclipsed by the Silly Symphonies short the *Three Little Pigs* in 1933, Mickey still maintained great popularity among theater audiences too, until 1935, when polls showed that Popeye was more popular than Mickey.^{[24][25][26]} By 1934, Mickey merchandise had earned \$600,000.00 a year.^[27] In 1935, Disney began to phase out the Mickey Mouse Clubs, due to administration problems.^[28]

About this time, story artists at Disney were finding it increasingly difficult to write material for Mickey. As he had developed into a role model for children, they were limited in the types of gags they could make. This led to Mickey taking more of a secondary role in some of his next films allowing for more emphasis on other characters. In *Orphan's Benefit* (August 11, 1934) Mickey first appeared with Donald Duck who had been introduced earlier that year in the *Silly Symphonies* series. The tempestuous duck would provide Disney with seemingly endless story ideas and would remain a recurring character in Mickey's cartoons.

Color films (1935–1953)

Mickey first appeared animated in color in *Parade of the Award Nominees* in 1932, however the film strip was created for the 5th Academy Awards ceremony and was not released to the public. Mickey's official first color film came in 1935 with *The Band Concert*. The Technicolor film process was used in the film production. Here Mickey conducted the *William Tell Overture*, but the band is swept up by a tornado. It is said that conductor Arturo Toscanini so loved this short that, upon first seeing it, he asked the projectionist to run it again. In 1994, *The Band Concert* was voted the third-greatest cartoon of all time in a poll of animation professionals. By coloring and partially redesigning Mickey, Walt would put Mickey back on top once again, and Mickey would reach popularity he never reached before as audiences now gave him more appeal.^[29] Also in 1935, Walt would receive a special award from the League of Nations for creating Mickey.



Mickey in *The Band Concert* (1935).

However, by 1938, the more manic Donald Duck would surpass the passive Mickey, resulting in a redesign of the mouse between 1938 and 1940^[30] that put Mickey at the peak of his popularity.^[29] The second half of the 1930s saw the character Goofy reintroduced as a series regular. Together, Mickey, Donald Duck, and Goofy would go on several adventures together. Several of the films by the comic trio are some of Mickey's most critically acclaimed films, including *Mickey's Fire Brigade* (1935), *Moose Hunters* (1937), *Clock Cleaners* (1937), *Lonesome Ghosts* (1937), *Boat Builders* (1938), and *Mickey's Trailer* (1938). Also during this era, Mickey would star in *Brave Little Tailor* (1938), an adaptation of *The Valiant Little Tailor*, which was nominated for an Academy Award.

Mickey was redesigned by animator Fred Moore which was first seen in *The Pointer* (1939). Instead of having solid black eyes, Mickey was given white eyes with pupils, a Caucasian skin colored face, and a pear-shaped body. In the 40's, he changed once more in *The Little Whirlwind*, where he used his trademark pants for the last time in decades, lost his tail, got more realistic ears that changed with perspective and a different body anatomy.

But this change would only last for a short period of time before returning to the one in "*The Pointer*", with the exception of his pants. In his final theatrical cartoons in the 1950s, he was given eyebrows, which were removed in the more recent cartoons.



Mickey in *Fantasia* (1940).

In 1940 Mickey appeared in his first feature length film, *Fantasia*. His screen role as The Sorcerer's Apprentice, set to the symphonic poem of the same name by Paul Dukas, is perhaps the most famous segment of the film and one of Mickey's most iconic roles. The segment features no dialogue at all, only the music. The apprentice (Mickey), not willing to do his chores, puts on the sorcerer's magic hat after the sorcerer goes to bed and casts a spell on a broom, which causes the broom to come to life and perform the most tiring chore—filling up a deep well using two buckets of water. When the well eventually overflows, Mickey finds himself unable to control the broom, leading to a near-flood. After the segment ends, Mickey is seen in silhouette shaking hands with Leopold Stokowski, who conducts all the music heard in *Fantasia*. Mickey has

often been pictured in the red robe and blue sorcerer's hat in merchandising. It was also featured into the climax of Fantasmic!, an attraction at the Disney theme parks.

After 1940, Mickey's popularity would decline until his 1955 re-emergence as a daily children's television personality.^[31] Despite this, the character continued to appear regularly in animated shorts until 1943 (winning his only competitive Academy Award—with canine companion Pluto—for a short subject, *Lend a Paw*) and again from 1946 to 1952.

The last regular installment of the *Mickey Mouse* film series came in 1953 with *The Simple Things* in which Mickey and Pluto go fishing and are pestered by a flock of seagulls.

Television and later films

In the 1950s, Mickey became more known for his appearances on television, particularly with *The Mickey Mouse Club*. Many of his theatrical cartoon shorts were rereleased on television series such as *Ink & Paint Club*, various forms of the Walt Disney anthology television series, and on home video. Mickey returned to theatrical animation in 1983 with *Mickey's Christmas Carol*, an adaptation of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* in which Mickey played Bob Cratchit. This was followed up in 1990 with *The Prince and the Pauper*.

Throughout the decades, Mickey Mouse competed with Warner Bros.' Bugs Bunny for animated popularity. But in 1988, in a historic moment in motion picture history, the two rivals finally shared screen time in the Robert Zemeckis Disney/Amblin film *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*. Disney and Warner signed an agreement stating that each character had *exactly* the same amount of screen time in the scene, right down to the frame.

Similar to his animated inclusion into a live-action film on *Roger Rabbit*, Mickey made a featured cameo appearance in the 1990 television special *The Muppets at Walt Disney World* where he met Kermit the Frog. The two are established in the story as having been old friends. The Muppets have otherwise spoofed and referenced Mickey over a dozen times since the 1970s. Eventually, The Muppets were purchased by the Walt



Mickey with his Warner Bros. counterpart Bugs Bunny in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (1988).

Disney Company in 2004.



Mickey in *Disney's House of Mouse* (2001–2003).

Mickey appeared on several animated logos for Walt Disney Home Entertainment, starting with the "Neon Mickey" logo and then to the "Sorcerer Mickey" logos used for regular and Classics release titles.

His most recent theatrical cartoon short was 1995's *Runaway Brain*, while from 1999 to 2004, he appeared in direct-to-video features like *Mickey's Once Upon a Christmas*, *Mickey, Donald, Goofy: The Three Musketeers* and the computer-animated *Mickey's Twice Upon a Christmas*.

Many television series have centered around Mickey, such as the ABC shows *Mickey Mouse Works* (1999—2000), *Disney's House of Mouse* (2001—2003) and Disney Channel's *Mickey Mouse Clubhouse* (2006–

present). Prior to all these, Mickey was also featured as an unseen character in the *Bonkers* episode "You Oughta Be In Toons".

Mickey has recently been announced to star in two films. One is being based on the Magic Kingdom theme park at the Walt Disney World Resort, while the other is a film idea pitched by Walt Disney Animation Studios veteran Burny Mattinson centering around Mickey, Donald and Goofy.^[32]

On March 12, 2013; Disney announced plans to release new Mickey Mouse cartoon shorts for the first time since 1953. Airing on Disney Channel beginning in late June, Mickey is drawn in a similar fashion to his original 1928 design.^[33]

Voice actors

A large part of Mickey's screen persona is his famously shy, falsetto voice. From his first speaking role in the 1929 short *The Karnival Kid* onward, Mickey was voiced by Walt Disney himself, a task in which Disney took great personal pride. However, by 1946, Disney was becoming too busy with running the studio to do regular voice work which meant he could not do Mickey's voice anymore (and as it is speculated his cigarette habit had damaged his voice over the years), and during the recording of the *Mickey and the Beanstalk* section of *Fun and Fancy Free*, Mickey's voice was handed over to veteran Disney musician and actor Jimmy MacDonald. (Both Disney's and MacDonald's voices can be heard on the final soundtrack.) MacDonald voiced Mickey in the remainder of the theatrical shorts, and for various television and publicity projects up until his retirement in the mid-1970s, although Walt voiced Mickey again for the introductions to the original 1954—1959 run of *The Mickey Mouse Club* TV series and the "Fourth Anniversary Show" episode of the Disneyland TV series aired on September 11, 1958.



Walt Disney, the co-creator of Mickey Mouse and founder of the Walt Disney Company, was the original voice of Mickey.

The 1983 short film *Mickey's Christmas Carol* marked the theatrical debut of the late Wayne Allwine as Mickey Mouse, who was the voice of Mickey until his death in 2009.^[34] Allwine once recounted something MacDonald had told him about voicing Mickey: "The main piece of advice that Jim gave me about Mickey helped me keep things in perspective. He said, 'Just remember kid, you're only

filling in for the boss.' And that's the way he treated doing Mickey for years and years. From Walt, and now from Jimmy."^[35] Allwine was, incidentally, married to Russi Taylor, the current voice of Minnie Mouse. Les Perkins did the voice of Mickey in two TV specials "Down and Out with Donald Duck" and "DTV Valentine" in the mid-1980s.

Bret Iwan, a former Hallmark greeting card artist, is the current voice of Mickey. His early recordings in 2009 included work for the Disney Cruise Line, Mickey toys, Theme Parks, and also the Disney on Ice: Celebrations! ice show.^[36] His first video game voice-over of Mickey Mouse can be found on *Kingdom Hearts: Birth by Sleep*, a video game for PlayStation Portable. He has also voiced the character in the next games for the *Kingdom Hearts* series. Iwan also does the vocal effects of Mickey in the games *Epic Mickey* and *Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two*.

Mickey in comics

Main article: Mickey Mouse and Friends (comic book)



Mickey and Horace Horsecollar from the *Mickey Mouse* daily strip; created by Floyd Gottfredson and published December 1932.

Mickey first appeared in comics after he had appeared in 15 commercially successful animated shorts and was easily recognized by the public. Walt Disney was approached by King Features Syndicate with the offer to license Mickey and his supporting characters for use in a comic strip. Disney accepted and Mickey made his first comic strip appearance on January 13, 1930. The comical plot was credited to Disney himself, art to Ub Iwerks and inking to Win Smith. The first week or so of the strip featured a loose adaptation of "*Plane Crazy*". Minnie soon became the first addition to the cast. The strips first released between January 13, 1930, and March 31, 1930, has been occasionally reprinted in comic book form under the collective title "*Lost on a Desert Island*". Animation historian Jim Korkis notes "After the eighteenth strip, Iwerks left and his inker, Win Smith, continued drawing the gag-a-day format..."^[37]

In early 1930, after Iwerks' departure, Disney was at first content to continue scripting the Mickey Mouse comic strip, assigning the art to Win Smith. However, Disney's focus had always been in animation and Smith was soon assigned with the scripting as well. Smith was apparently discontent at the prospect of having to script, draw, and ink a series by himself as evidenced by his sudden resignation.

Disney then searched for a replacement among the remaining staff of the Studio. He selected Floyd Gottfredson, a recently hired employee. At the time Gottfredson was reportedly eager to work in animation and somewhat reluctant to accept his new assignment. Disney had to assure him the assignment was only temporary and that he would eventually return to animation. Gottfredson accepted and ended up holding this "temporary" assignment from May 5, 1930, to November 15, 1935.

Walt Disney's last script for the strip appeared May 17, 1930.^[37] Gottfredson's first task was to finish the storyline Disney had started on April 1, 1930. The storyline was completed on September 20, 1930, and later reprinted in comic book form as *Mickey Mouse in Death Valley*. This early adventure expanded the cast of the strip which to this point only included Mickey and Minnie. Among the characters who had their first comic strip appearances in this story were Clarabelle Cow, Horace Horsecollar and Black Pete as well as the debuts of corrupted lawyer Sylvester Shyster and Minnie's uncle Mortimer Mouse. The Death Valley narrative was followed by *Mr. Slicker and the Egg Robbers*, first printed between September 22 and December 26, 1930,

which introduced Marcus Mouse and his wife as Minnie's parents.

Starting with these two early comic strip stories, Mickey's versions in animation and comics are considered to have diverged from each other. While Disney and his cartoon shorts would continue to focus on comedy, the comic strip effectively combined comedy and adventure. This adventurous version of Mickey would continue to appear in comic strips and later comic books throughout the 20th and into the 21st century.

Floyd Gottfredson left his mark with stories such as *Mickey Mouse Joins the Foreign Legion* (1936) and *The Gleam* (1942). He also created the Phantom Blot, Eega Beeva, Morty and Ferdie, Captain Churchmouse, and Butch. Besides Gottfredson artists for the strip over the years included Roman Arambula, Rick Hoover, Manuel Gonzales, Carson Van Osten, Jim Engel, Bill Wright, Ted Thwailles and Daan Jippes; writers included Ted Osborne, Merrill De Maris, Bill Walsh, Dick Shaw, Roy Williams, Del Connell, and Floyd Norman.

The next artist to leave his mark on the character was Paul Murry in Dell Comics. His first Mickey tale appeared in 1950 but Mickey did not become a speciality until Murry's first serial for *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories* in 1953 ("The Last Resort"). In the same period Romano Scarpa in Italy for the magazine *Topolino* began to revitalize Mickey in stories that brought back the Phantom Blot and Eega Beeva along with new creations such as the Atomo Bleep-Bleep. While the stories at Western Publishing during the Silver Age emphasized Mickey as a detective in the style of Sherlock Holmes, in the modern era several editors and creators have consciously undertaken to depict a more vigorous Mickey in the mold of the classic Gottfredson adventures. This renaissance has been spearheaded by Byron Erickson, David Gerstein, Noel Van Horn, Michael T. Gilbert and César Ferioli.

In Europe, Mickey Mouse became the main attraction of a number of comics magazines, the most famous being *Topolino* in Italy from 1932 on, *Le Journal de Mickey* in France from 1934 on, *Don Miki* in Spain and the Greek *Miky Maous*.

Mickey was the main character for the series *MM Mickey Mouse Mystery Magazine*, published in Italy from 1999 to 2001.

In 1958, Mickey Mouse was introduced to the Arab world through another comic book called "Sameer". Mickey Mouse became so popular in Egypt that he got a comic book with his name. Mickey's comics in Egypt are licensed by Disney and were published since 1959 by "Dar Al-Hilal" and they were a big hit, but unfortunately Dar Al-Hilal stopped the publication in 2003 because of problems with Disney, luckily the comics were re-released by "Nahdat Masr" in 2004 and the first issues were sold out in less than 8 hours.^[38]

Merchandising

Since his early years Mickey Mouse has been licensed by Disney to appear on many different kinds of merchandise. Mickey was produced as plush toys and figurines, and Mickey's image has graced almost everything from t-shirts to lunch boxes. Largely responsible for Disney merchandising in the 1930s was Kay Kamen (d. 1949) who was called a "stickler for quality." Kamen was recognized by The Walt Disney Company as having a significant part in Mickey's rise to stardom and was named a Disney Legend in 1998.^[39]

Mickey was most famously featured on wrist watches and alarm clocks, typically utilizing his hands as the actual hands on the face of the clock. The first Mickey Mouse watches were manufactured in 1933 by the Ingersoll Watch Company. The seconds were indicated by a turning disk below Mickey. The first Mickey watch was sold at the Century of Progress in Chicago, 1933 for \$3.75. Mickey Mouse watches have been sold by other companies and designers throughout the years, including Timex, Elgin, Helbros, Bradley, Lorus, and Gérald Genta^[40] The fictional character Robert Langdon from Dan Brown's novels was said to wear a Mickey Mouse

watch as a reminder "to stay young at heart."^[41]

In 1989, Milton Bradley released the electronic-talking game titled *Mickey Says*, with three modes featuring Mickey Mouse as its host. Mickey also appeared in other toys and games, including the Worlds of Wonder-released *The Talking Mickey Mouse*.

Fisher-Price has recently produced a line of talking animatronic Mickey dolls including "Dance Star Mickey" (2010)^[42] and "Rock Star Mickey" (2011).^[43]

Mickey at the Disney parks

As the official Walt Disney mascot, Mickey has played a central role in the Disney parks since the opening of Disneyland in 1955. As with other characters, Mickey is often portrayed by a non-speaking costumed actor. In this form he has participated in ceremonies and countless parades. A popular activity with guests is getting to meet and pose for photographs with the mouse. As of the presidency of George W. Bush, Mickey has met every U.S. President since Harry Truman, with the exception of Lyndon B. Johnson.^[44]



Mickey and Minnie at Hong Kong Disneyland Park.

Mickey also features in several specific attractions at the Disney parks. Mickey's Toontown (Disneyland and Tokyo Disneyland) is a themed land which is a recreation of Mickey's neighborhood. Buildings are built in a cartoon style and guests can visit Mickey or Minnie's houses, Donald Duck's boat, or Goofy's garage. This is a common place to meet the characters.^[45]

Mickey's PhilharMagic (Magic Kingdom, Tokyo Disneyland, Hong Kong Disneyland) is a 4D film which features Mickey in the familiar role of symphony conductor. At Main Street Cinema several of Mickey's short films are shown on a rotating basis; the sixth film is always *Steamboat Willie*. Mickey plays a central role in *Fantasmic!* (Disneyland Resort, Disney's Hollywood Studios) a live nighttime show which famously features Mickey in his role as the Sorcerer's Apprentice. Mickey was also a central character in the now defunct Mickey Mouse Revue (Magic Kingdom, Tokyo Disneyland) which was an indoor show featuring animatronic characters. Mickey's face currently graces the Mickey's Fun Wheel at Disney California Adventure Park, where a figure of him also stands on top of Silly Symphony Swings.

In addition to Mickey's overt presence in the parks, numerous images of him are also subtly included in sometimes unexpected places. This phenomenon is known as "Hidden Mickey", involving hidden images in Disney films, theme parks and merchandise.

Mickey in video games

Main article: List of Disney video games (Mickey Mouse Series)

Like many popular characters, Mickey has starred in many video games, including *Mickey Mousecapade* on the Nintendo Entertainment System, *Mickey Mania: The Timeless Adventures of Mickey Mouse*, *Mickey's Ultimate*



A 1933 Ingersoll Mickey Mouse wrist watch.

Challenge, and *Disney's Magical Quest* on the Super Nintendo Entertainment System, *Castle of Illusion Starring Mickey Mouse* on the Mega Drive/Genesis, *Mickey Mouse: Magic Wands!* on the Game Boy, and many others. In the 2000s, the *Disney's Magical Quest* series were ported to the Game Boy Advance, while Mickey made his sixth generation era debut in *Disney's Magical Mirror Starring Mickey Mouse*, a Nintendo GameCube title aimed at younger audiences. Mickey plays a major role in the *Kingdom Hearts* series, as the king of Disney Castle and aide to the protagonist, Sora. King Mickey wields the Keyblade, a weapon in the form of a key that has the power to open any lock and combat darkness. *Epic Mickey*, featuring a darker version of the Disney universe, was released in 2010 for the Wii. The game is part of an effort by The Walt Disney Company to re-brand the Mickey Mouse character by moving away from his current squeaky clean image and reintroducing the mischievous side of his personality.^[5]

Awards and honors

Mickey Mouse has received nine nominations for the Academy Award for Best Animated Short Film. These are *Mickey's Orphans* (1931), *Building a Building* (1933), *Brave Little Tailor* (1938), *The Pointer* (1939), *Lend a Paw* (1941), *Squatter's Rights* (1946), *Mickey and the Seal* (1948), *Mickey's Christmas Carol* (1983), and *Runaway Brain* (1995). Among these, *Lend a Paw* was the only film to actually win the award. Additionally, in 1932 Walt Disney received an honorary Academy Award in recognition of Mickey's creation and popularity.

In 1994, four of Mickey's cartoons were included in the book *The 50 Greatest Cartoons* which listed the greatest cartoons of all time as voted by members of the animation field. The films were *The Band Concert* (#3), *Steamboat Willie* (#13), *Brave Little Tailor* (#26), and *Clock Cleaners* (#27).

On November 18, 1978, in honor of his 50th anniversary, Mickey became the first cartoon character to have a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. The star is located on 6925 Hollywood Blvd.

Melbourne (Australia) runs the annual Moomba festival street procession and appointed Mickey Mouse as their *King of Moomba* (1977).^[46] Although immensely popular with children, there was controversy with the appointment: some Melburnians wanted a 'home-grown' choice, e.g. Blinky Bill; when it was revealed that Patricia O'Carroll (from Disneyland's Disney on Parade show) was performing the mouse, Australian newspapers reported "Mickey Mouse is really a girl!"^[47]

Mickey was the Grand Marshal of the Tournament of Roses Parade on New Year's Day 2005. He was the first cartoon character to receive the honor, and only the second fictional character after Kermit the Frog in 1996.

Social impact

Use in politics

In the United States, protest votes are often made in order to indicate dissatisfaction with the slate of candidates presented on a particular ballot, or to highlight the inadequacies of a particular voting procedure. Since most states' electoral systems do not provide for blank balloting or a choice of "None of the Above", most protest votes take the form of a clearly non-serious candidate's name entered as a write-in vote. Mickey Mouse is often



Mickey's star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

selected for this purpose.^{[48][49]}

In the 1988 Iowa presidential primary, Mickey Mouse came in second place with 7% of the vote behind native son Tom Harkin. Because of Harkin's overwhelming popularity in his home state, none of the other candidates bothered registering for the ballot or campaigning there.^[50]

Mickey Mouse's name has also been known to appear fraudulently on voter registration lists, most recently in the 2008 U.S. Presidential Election.^{[51][52]}

Pejorative use of Mickey's name

"*Mickey Mouse*" is a slang expression meaning small-time, amateurish or trivial. In the UK and Ireland, it also means poor quality or counterfeit. However, in parts of Australia it can mean excellent or very good.^[53]

- In *The Godfather Part II*, Fredo's justification of betraying Michael is that his orders in the family usually were "Send Fredo off to do this, send Fredo off to do that! Let Fredo take care of some Mickey Mouse night club somewhere!" as opposed to more meaningful tasks.
- In an early episode of the 1978–82 sitcom *Mork & Mindy*, Mork stated that Pluto was "a Mickey Mouse planet," referring to the future dwarf planet having the same name as Mickey's pet dog Pluto. Actually, the planet was named shortly before the dog was.
- In 1984, just after an ice hockey game in which Wayne Gretzky's Edmonton Oilers beat the New Jersey Devils 13–4, Gretzky was quoted as saying to a reporter, "Well, it's time they got their act together, they're ruining the whole league. They had better stop running a *Mickey Mouse organization* and put somebody on the ice."^[54] Reacting to Gretzky's comment, Devils fans wore Mickey Mouse apparel when the Oilers returned to New Jersey.
- In the 1993 Warner Bros. film *Demolition Man*, as Sylvester Stallone's character is fighting the malfunctioning AI of his out-of-control police car, he shouts for the system to "Brake! Brake! Brake, now, you *Mickey Mouse piece of ****!*"^[55]
- In the 1996 Warner Bros. film *Space Jam*, Bugs Bunny derogatorily referred to Daffy Duck's idea for the name of their basketball team, asking, "What kind of Mickey Mouse organization would name a team 'The Ducks?'" (This also referenced the Mighty Ducks of Anaheim, a NHL team that was then owned by Disney, as well as the Disney-made "The Mighty Ducks" movie franchise. This was showing the Disney/Warner Bros. rivalry.)
- In the United States armed forces, actions that produce good looks, but have little practical use (such as the specific manner of making beds in basic training or the polishing of brass fittings onboard ship) are commonly referred to as "Mickey Mouse work".
- In schools a "Mickey Mouse course", "Mickey Mouse major", or "Mickey Mouse degree" is a class, college major, or degree where very little effort is necessary in order to attain a good grade (especially an A) and/or one where the subject matter of such a class is not of any importance in the labor market.^[56]
- Musicians often refer to a film score that directly follows each action on screen as *Mickey Mousing* (also *mickey-mousing* and *mickeymousing*).^[57]
- The software company Microsoft has been derogatorily called "Mickeysoft".^[58]
- During World War II, the Motor Minesweepers used by the British Royal Naval Patrol Service were unofficially known as "Mickey Mouses".
- In the beginning of the 1980s, then-British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher once called the European Parliament a "Mickey Mouse parliament", meaning a discussion club without influence.^[59]
- In the British sitcom *Red Dwarf*, in the episode "Quarantine", after the team's substandard equipment nearly cost them their lives, Lister pointed out, "We're a real Mickey Mouse operation, aren't we?" The Cat replied, "Mickey Mouse? We ain't even Betty Boop!"

- The combined road course at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway used for the F1 U.S. Grand Prix has been described by Jacques Villeneuve and other competitors as "Mickey Mouse"^[60] due to its slow uninteresting corners, and lack of challenging corners.

Parodies and criticism

Mickey Mouse's global fame has made him both a symbol of The Walt Disney Company and of the United States itself. For this reason Mickey has been used frequently in anti-American satire, such as the infamous underground cartoon "*Mickey Mouse in Vietnam*". There have been numerous parodies of Mickey Mouse, such as the Mad Magazine parody "*Mickey Rodent*" by Will Elder in which the mouse walks around unshaven and jails Donald Duck out of jealousy over the duck's larger popularity.^[61] The grotesque Rat Fink character was created by Ed "Big Daddy" Roth over his hatred of Mickey Mouse. In *The Simpsons Movie*, Bart Simpson puts a black bra on his head to mimic Mickey Mouse and says: "I'm the mascot of an evil corporation!"^[62] On the Comedy Central series *South Park*, Mickey is depicted as the sadistic, greedy, foul-mouthed boss of The Walt Disney Company, only interested in money.

He also appears briefly with Donald Duck in the comic *Squeak the Mouse* of the Italian cartoonist Massimo Mattioli.

In an episode of "Full Frontal Nerdity," by Aaron Williams, Mickey is shown as desperately trying to unload Miramax.^[63]

Legal issues

It is sometimes erroneously stated that the Mickey Mouse character is only copyrighted. In fact, the character, like all major Disney characters, is also trademarked, which lasts in perpetuity as long as it continues to be used commercially by its owner. So, whether or not a particular Disney cartoon goes into the public domain, the characters themselves may not be used as trademarks without authorization. However, within the United States, European Union and some other jurisdictions, the Copyright Term Extension Act (sometimes called the 'Mickey Mouse Protection Act' because of extensive lobbying by the Disney corporation) and similar legislation has ensured that works such as the early Mickey Mouse cartoons will remain under copyright until at least 2023. However, some copyright scholars argue that Disney's copyright on the earliest version of the character may be invalid due to ambiguity in the copyright notice for *Steamboat Willie*.^[64]

The Walt Disney Company has become well known for protecting its trademark on the Mickey Mouse character, whose likeness is closely associated with the company, with particular zeal. In 1989, Disney threatened legal action against three daycare centers in Florida for having Mickey Mouse and other Disney characters painted on their walls. The characters were removed, and rival Universal Studios replaced them with Universal cartoon characters.^[65]

Walt Disney Productions v. Air Pirates

In 1971, a group of underground cartoonists calling themselves the Air Pirates, after a group of villains from early Mickey Mouse films, produced a comic called *Air Pirates Funnies*. In the first issue, cartoonist Dan



"Copying is not theft!" badge with a character resembling Mickey Mouse is a visual pun on Mickey as a symbol of the whole IP industry and its attitude towards copying.

O'Neill depicted Mickey and Minnie Mouse engaging in explicit sexual behavior and consuming drugs. As O'Neill explained, "The air pirates were...some sort of bizarre concept to steal the air, pirate the air, steal the media...Since we were cartoonists, the logical thing was Disney."^[66] Rather than change the appearance or name of the character, which O'Neill felt would dilute the parody, the mouse depicted in *Air Pirates Funnies* looks like and is named "Mickey Mouse". Disney sued for copyright infringement, and after a series of appeals, O'Neill eventually lost and was ordered to pay Disney \$1.9 million. The outcome of the case remains controversial among free-speech advocates. New York Law School professor Edward Samuels said, "[The Air Pirates] set parody back twenty years."^[67]

Censorship

In 1930, The German Board of Film Censors prohibited showing a Mickey Mouse film because they felt the kepi-wearing mouse negatively portrayed the Germans and would "reawaken the latest anti-German feeling existing abroad since the War".^[68] A mid-1930s German newspaper article even stated:

"Mickey Mouse is the most miserable ideal ever revealed...Healthy emotions tell every independent young man and every honorable youth that the dirty and filth-covered vermin, the greatest bacteria carrier in the animal kingdom, cannot be the ideal type of animal...Away with Jewish brutalization of the people! Down with Mickey Mouse! Wear the Swastika Cross!"^{[69][70][71]}

Art Spiegelman used this quote on the opening page of the second volume of his graphic novel *Maus*.

The 1935 Romanian authorities banned Mickey Mouse films from cinemas after they feared that children would be "scared to see a ten-foot mouse in the movie theatre".^[72] In 1938, based on the Ministry of Popular Culture's recommendation that a reform was necessary "to raise children in the firm and imperialist spirit of the Fascist revolution," the Italian Government banned foreign children's literature^[73] except Mickey; Disney characters were exempted from the decree for the "acknowledged artistic merit" of Disney's work.^[74] Actually Mussolini's children were fond of Mickey Mouse, so they managed to delay his ban as long as possible.^[75] In 1942, after Italy declared war on the USA, fascism forced the Italian publishers to suddenly stop printing any Disney stories. Mickey's stories were replaced by the adventures of *Tuffolino*, a new human character created by Federico Pedrocchi (script) and Pier Lorenzo De Vita (art). After the downfall of Italy's fascist government, the ban was removed.

Filmography

Main article: List of Mickey Mouse films and appearances

Mickey has been announced to star in two films. One is a live-action/CGI hybrid film based on the Magic Kingdom theme park at the Walt Disney World Resort,^[76] while the other is a film idea pitched by Walt Disney Animation Studios veteran Burny Mattinson centering around Mickey, Donald and Goofy.^[32]

Selected short films

- *Steamboat Willie* (1928)
- *Plane Crazy* (1929)
- *The Karnival Kid* (1929)
- *Mickey's Orphans* (1931)
- *Thru the Mirror* (1936)
- *Clock Cleaners* (1937)
- *Lonesome Ghosts* (1937)
- *Brave Little Tailor* (1938)
- *Symphony Hour* (1942)
- *Squatter's Rights* (1946)
- *Mickey and the Seal* (1948)
- *The Simple Things* (1953)

- *Building a Building* (1933)
- *The Mad Doctor* (1933)
- *The Band Concert* (1935)
- *The Pointer* (1939)
- *The Nifty Nineties* (1941)
- *Lend a Paw* (1941)
- *Mickey's Christmas Carol* (1983)
- *The Prince and the Pauper* (1990)
- *Runaway Brain* (1995)

Full length films

- *Hollywood Party* (cameo, 1934)
- *Fantasia* (1940)
- *Fun and Fancy Free* (1947)
- *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (cameo, 1988)
- *Mickey's Once Upon a Christmas* (1999)
- *Fantasia 2000* (1999)
- *Mickey's House of Villains* (2002)
- *Mickey, Donald, Goofy: The Three Musketeers* (2004)
- *Mickey's Twice Upon a Christmas* (2004)

Television series

- *The Mickey Mouse Club* (1955–1959; 1977–1979; 1989–1994)
- *Mickey Mouse Works* (1999–2000)
- *Disney's House of Mouse* (2001–2003)
- *Mickey Mouse Clubhouse* (2006–present)

See also

- Celebration Mickey, a 2-foot-tall (0.61 m), 100 lb (45 kg), 24-karat gold authentic Mickey Mouse sculpture
- *Mickey Mouse Adventures*, a short-lived comic starring Mickey Mouse as the protagonist
- Mickey Mouse universe, the phenomenon that has spawned from the Mickey Mouse series and other related characters
- Mouse Museum, a Russian museum featuring artifacts and memorabilia relating to Mickey Mouse

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External links

- Disney's Mickey Mouse character page (<http://mickey.disney.com/mickey>)
- Mickey Mouse (<http://coa.inducks.org/character.php?c=MM>) at the INDUCKS
- Mickey Mouse (<http://www.imdb.com/character/ch0000630/>) at the Internet Movie Database
- Mickey Mouse's Campaign Website (<http://mickeyforpresident.com>)
- Wayne Allwine (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/culture-obituaries/film-obituaries/5363110/Wayne-Allwine.html>) – Daily Telegraph obituary

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