

Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards

alfie kohn punished by rewards has become a significant topic in educational psychology and parenting debates. Many educators and parents have traditionally relied on reward systems to motivate children, believing that positive reinforcement encourages desirable behavior. However, Alfie Kohn, a renowned educational thinker and author, challenges this conventional approach, arguing that rewards can be counterproductive and may even hinder genuine motivation and moral development. This article explores Kohn's critique of reward-based systems, examines the psychological underpinnings of his arguments, and offers alternative strategies rooted in intrinsic motivation and meaningful engagement.

Understanding Alfie Kohn's Perspective on Rewards

Who Is Alfie Kohn?

Alfie Kohn is an American author, speaker, and educational theorist known for his critical stance on traditional educational practices. His work emphasizes the importance of fostering intrinsic motivation in learners, promoting cooperative learning, and cultivating a love for learning rather than extrinsic incentives.

The Core of Kohn's Critique: Rewards and Punishments

Kohn argues that both rewards and punishments are forms of control that undermine autonomy and intrinsic motivation. Specifically, he claims that:

- Rewards diminish genuine interest and internal motivation.
- They foster superficial compliance rather than meaningful engagement.
- They can create a dependency on external validation.
- They may promote unethical behavior to obtain rewards.

The Psychological Foundations

Kohn's critique is rooted in self-determination theory and motivation research, which suggest that:

- Autonomy, competence, and relatedness are essential to intrinsic motivation.
- External rewards can threaten autonomy, leading to reduced engagement.
- Punishments can evoke fear, resentment, and resistance.

The Problems with Reward Systems in Education and Parenting

How Rewards Impact Children

and Learners Reward systems, when misused, can produce unintended consequences:

- Surface-level compliance: Children may only do tasks for the reward, not because they find them meaningful.
- Reduced creativity: Rewards can limit risk-taking and experimentation.
- Short-term motivation: The effect of rewards often diminishes over time.
- Erosion of intrinsic interest: Over-reliance on external incentives can diminish natural curiosity.

Examples of Reward Systems Common reward approaches include:

- Stickers, gold stars, and praise for good behavior.
- Grades and point systems for academic achievement.
- Extrinsic incentives like money or prizes.

While sometimes effective in the short term, these strategies often fail to foster long-lasting motivation or moral development.

Evidence Against Rewards: Research and Case Studies

Key Studies Challenging Rewards Numerous studies support Kohn's stance:

- Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory: Demonstrates that external rewards can undermine intrinsic motivation.
- Harlow's Monkey Experiments: Show that comfort and relatedness are more motivating than external reinforcement.
- Meta-analyses: Indicate that extrinsic rewards can decrease performance and creativity.

Notable Case Studies

- A classroom that shifted from reward-based discipline to a supportive, autonomy-respecting environment saw improvements in student engagement.
- Parenting programs that eliminated extrinsic rewards reported increased cooperation and internal motivation among children.

Alternative Approaches to Motivation and Behavior

Fostering Intrinsic Motivation Kohn advocates for strategies that cultivate internal drive:

- Providing meaningful choices: Empower children to make decisions.
- Connecting learning to personal interests: Make activities relevant.
- Encouraging mastery and competence: Focus on progress, not just outcomes.
- Promoting autonomy: Respect children's independence.

Creating a Supportive Environment A nurturing environment emphasizes:

- Positive relationships
- Respect and understanding
- Open communication
- Encouragement and empathy

Constructive Discipline Strategies Instead of punishment or reward, Kohn suggests:

- Restorative practices: Focus on repairing relationships and understanding consequences.
- Natural consequences: Allow children to experience the results of their actions.
- Problem-solving discussions: Guide children to find solutions collaboratively.

Practical Steps for Parents and

Educators Implementing Intrinsic Motivation Techniques

1. Use descriptive praise: Focus on effort and strategies, not just outcomes.
2. Offer choices: Allow children to select activities or tasks.
3. Set achievable goals: Help children experience success.
4. Encourage curiosity: Ask open-ended questions and foster exploration.
5. Model enthusiasm: Demonstrate love for learning and growth.

Rethinking Rewards and Punishments

- Replace reward charts with recognition of effort and progress.
- Avoid using punishments that evoke shame or resentment.
- Focus on building trust and understanding rather than control.

Common Misconceptions About Rewards Are Rewards Always Bad? While Kohn criticizes overuse and misuse of rewards, some believe they are necessary for motivation. The key is moderation and context:

- Rewards can be effective temporarily but should not replace intrinsic motivation.
- Use rewards thoughtfully to complement other motivational strategies.

Can Rewards Be Used Effectively? Yes, but with caution:

- Use rewards to acknowledge genuine effort and improvement.
- Avoid using rewards as the primary motivator.
- Pair rewards with meaningful activities that foster internal interest.

The Broader Impact of Moving Away from Rewards

Benefits for Children

- Increased internal motivation
- Greater creativity and problem-solving skills
- Improved moral development
- Better emotional regulation

Benefits for Educators and Parents

- Less stress and pressure
- More authentic relationships
- Greater satisfaction in fostering genuine growth

Societal Implications

A shift toward intrinsic motivation and autonomy can lead to:

- More ethical and responsible citizens
- Innovation and resilience
- A culture that values effort over external validation

Conclusion

Alfie Kohn's perspective on punishment by rewards challenges us to reconsider foundational assumptions about motivation, discipline, and education. His critique underscores the importance of nurturing children's internal drives, fostering autonomy, and creating environments where genuine engagement flourishes. Moving away from extrinsic incentives toward strategies that promote intrinsic motivation can lead to more meaningful, lasting learning and personal growth. Educators, parents, and policymakers alike should reflect on these insights and work toward practices that respect children's natural curiosity and desire to learn for its own sake.

References

- Kohn, A. (1993). *Punished by Rewards: The Trouble with Gold Stars, Incentive Plans, A's, Praise, and Other*

Bribes. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. - Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). Self-Determination Theory. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68–78. - Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations: Classic Definitions and New Directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25(1), 54–67. - Harlow, H. F. (1958). Biological and biochemical bases of behavior. *American Psychologist*, 13(5), 245–251. Final Thoughts Adopting Alfie Kohn's insights means embracing a philosophy that values motivation rooted in internal satisfaction and moral development. By reducing reliance on rewards and punishments, educators and parents can help children develop resilience, creativity, and a lifelong love of learning—traits that are essential in today's ever-changing world.

Alfie Kohn Punished by Rewards: An In-Depth Examination of the Flaws in Reward-Based Motivation

Introduction

In contemporary education and child development discourse, the use of rewards as a means of motivating behavior remains a widespread practice. However, many experts, including renowned educator and author Alfie Kohn, challenge the efficacy and ethicality of this approach. Kohn's critique centers on the idea that rewards, particularly when used as punishment or control mechanisms, can undermine intrinsic motivation, hinder genuine learning, and foster negative emotional responses. This detailed review explores Kohn's arguments against rewards, examines the psychological and educational research supporting his claims, and considers alternative strategies rooted in fostering intrinsic motivation.

Understanding Alfie Kohn's Perspective on Rewards

Background of Alfie Kohn's Work

Alfie Kohn is a well-respected thinker in the fields of education, parenting, and human behavior. His influential books, such as *Punished by Rewards* (1993), challenge conventional wisdom that external incentives are effective tools for

shaping behavior. Kohn's work advocates for a paradigm shift toward intrinsic motivation—where individuals engage in activities because they find them meaningful, interesting, or satisfying—rather than external motivators like rewards or punishments.

The Core Critique: Why Rewards Are Problematic

1. Rewards Undermine Intrinsic Motivation

Kohn's most central argument is that rewards diminish intrinsic motivation. When children or students perform an activity primarily to earn a reward, their internal desire to engage diminishes over time. This phenomenon, often called the overjustification effect, suggests that external incentives can overshadow internal interest.

1. Research Evidence:

2. Studies show that children who are offered extrinsic rewards for a task they already enjoy tend to lose interest once the reward is removed.
3. For example, Deci (1971) found that children who received rewards for drawing were less likely to choose to draw afterward, indicating a reduction in natural curiosity and enjoyment.

1. Rewards Promote Compliance, Not Genuine Engagement

While rewards may lead to immediate compliance, they rarely foster genuine engagement or a love for learning.

1. Surface-Level Motivation:

2. Children may do only what is necessary to earn the reward, leading to minimal understanding or internalization of the task.
3. Lack of Creativity and Autonomy:
4. Rewards can limit children's sense of autonomy, leading to rote performance rather than meaningful exploration.

1. Rewards Can Lead to Unintended Negative Consequences

Kohn highlights several adverse effects associated with reward use:

1. **Decreased Creativity:** When rewards are tied to specific outcomes, children may avoid taking risks or exploring novel ideas.
2. **Increased Competition and Jealousy:** Rewards can foster a competitive environment, damaging social relationships.
3. **Manipulation and Deception:** Children might manipulate situations to obtain rewards, undermining honesty.
4. **Fear of Failure:** The emphasis on reward attainment can induce anxiety and fear of failure, discouraging perseverance.

The Punishment-Reward Dynamic: A Damaging Cycle

How Rewards Function as a Form of Punishment

Kohn emphasizes that rewards are often used as tools of control, equating them with manipulative tactics that can be akin to punishment in disguise.

1. **Reward as a Bribe:**
2. Offering rewards to influence behavior can be perceived as a form of bribery rather than a genuine encouragement.
3. **Conditional Acceptance:**
4. Rewards create a conditional sense of acceptance—children are valued only if they meet certain standards or perform specific behaviors.

The Reinforcement of Power Imbalances

Using rewards and punishments reinforces hierarchical structures in classrooms and families, where authority figures wield control over children's actions, rather than fostering mutual respect and understanding.

Empirical Evidence Against Rewards in Education and Parenting

Meta-Analyses and Scientific Studies

Numerous studies bolster Kohn's assertions:

1. Deci, Koestner, and Ryan (1999):
2. Their meta-analysis concluded that extrinsic rewards can undermine intrinsic motivation across various settings.

3. Lepper, Greene, and Nisbett (1973):
4. Demonstrated that children given extrinsic rewards for intrinsically interesting tasks showed less interest afterward.
5. Henderlong and Lepper (2002):
6. Found that rewards can decrease children's internal motivation and increase dependence on external validation.

Educational Implications

Research suggests that reward systems in schools often produce short-term gains but harm long-term motivation. For instance:

1. Students may perform well on tests but lack genuine curiosity or critical thinking skills.
2. Over time, the reliance on rewards can diminish students' internal drive to learn, leading to disengagement.

Alternative Approaches Advocated by Alfie Kohn

1. Fostering Autonomy and Choice

Instead of extrinsic motivators, Kohn advocates for creating environments where children have agency and autonomy.

1. Allow children to choose topics, projects, or methods of learning.
2. Encourage self-directed exploration, which naturally fosters intrinsic motivation.

1. Emphasizing Mastery and Personal Growth

Focus on individual progress rather than comparison or external validation.

1. Use formative assessments that highlight improvement.
2. Celebrate effort, persistence, and curiosity.

1. Creating a Supportive and Engaging Environment

Design classrooms around collaborative learning, meaningful tasks, and respectful relationships.

1. Use storytelling, real-world applications, and problem-solving activities to make learning relevant.
 2. Build trust and respect to motivate students intrinsically.
1. Recognizing and Valuing Effort and Process

Instead of rewarding only outcomes, acknowledge the learning process, fostering a growth mindset.

1. Provide feedback that emphasizes effort and strategies.
2. Encourage reflection and self-assessment.

Practical Implications for Parents and Educators

Rethinking Reward Systems

1. Move away from sticker charts, gold stars, or extrinsic incentives.
2. Focus on verbal praise that emphasizes effort, strategy, or perseverance rather than just outcomes.

Building Intrinsic Motivation

1. Create environments that make learning fun, relevant, and meaningful.
2. Encourage curiosity and exploration.
3. Support autonomy by giving children choices.

Handling Misbehavior or Lack of Motivation

1. Instead of punishment or rewards, use dialogue, problem-solving, and empathy.
2. Set clear expectations and involve children in establishing rules.

Criticisms and Limitations of Kohn's Approach

While Kohn's critique is compelling, it is not without controversy:

1. Some argue that rewards can be effective in certain contexts, especially for initial engagement or in motivating difficult tasks.
2. Teachers and parents may find it challenging to implement intrinsic

motivation strategies consistently.

3. Cultural differences may influence perceptions of rewards and motivation.

However, Kohn's core message emphasizes that rewards should not be the primary tool for motivation, and reliance on them can have long-term negative consequences.

Conclusion

Alfie Kohn's *Punished by Rewards* offers a compelling and evidence-backed critique of the widespread use of reward systems in education and parenting. His core assertion—that external rewards diminish intrinsic motivation, foster superficial compliance, and can lead to negative emotional and social consequences—resonates with a growing body of psychological research. Moving toward environments that promote autonomy, mastery, and meaningful engagement can better support genuine motivation, creativity, and well-being in children.

Educational practitioners, parents, and policymakers are encouraged to critically evaluate their reliance on rewards and consider alternative strategies that nurture children's natural curiosity and love for learning. Ultimately, Kohn's work advocates for a shift from control through extrinsic incentives to fostering internal motivation, respect, and intrinsic joy in the learning process.

Note: For those interested in exploring these ideas further, Alfie Kohn's book *Punished by Rewards* is a foundational text that delves deeply into the psychological research and practical implications of reward-based motivation.

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Questions & Answers About alfie kohn punished by rewards

No	Question	Answer
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1	What is Alfie Kohn's main argument against using rewards to motivate children?	Alfie Kohn argues that rewards can undermine intrinsic motivation, foster dependence on external validation, and diminish a child's natural desire to learn and behave ethically, ultimately leading to less genuine engagement.
2	How does Alfie Kohn suggest instead of using rewards to encourage good behavior?	Kohn advocates for fostering intrinsic motivation through approaches like positive reinforcement, understanding, empathy, and creating a supportive environment that encourages children to develop internal reasons for desired behaviors.
3	What are some potential negative effects of punishment and rewards according to Alfie Kohn?	Kohn states that both punishment and rewards can create anxiety, reduce creativity, suppress genuine interest, and lead to superficial compliance rather than true understanding or moral development.
4	Does Alfie Kohn believe that rewards can be effective in the long term?	No, Kohn argues that rewards are often effective only in the short term and can backfire over time by eroding internal motivation and fostering a focus on external approval.
5	What role does intrinsic motivation play in Alfie Kohn's critique of reward systems?	Intrinsic motivation is central to Kohn's critique; he believes that fostering a child's internal desire to learn and behave ethically is more sustainable and meaningful than relying on external rewards.
6	How does Alfie Kohn's view on punishment and rewards influence modern educational practices?	Kohn's perspective encourages educators to shift toward student-centered, intrinsic motivation strategies, promoting collaborative, empathetic, and meaningful learning experiences instead of traditional reward-based systems.
7	Are there any criticisms of Alfie Kohn's approach to punishment and rewards?	Yes, some critics argue that Kohn's ideas may overlook situations where rewards can be motivating or necessary, and that completely dismissing external reinforcement might not be practical in all contexts.

Alfie Kohn, punishment, rewards, intrinsic motivation, behavior management, positive discipline, motivation theories, educational psychology, reinforcement, alternative discipline

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Readers appreciate Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards eBooks for their ability to centralize information in one accessible format.

Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards eBooks support self-paced learning by allowing readers to control reading speed and progression.

Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards eBooks serve as dependable reference materials for long-term use.

Navigation tools improve efficiency when reviewing specific topics.

Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards eBooks help bridge the gap between theoretical concepts and practical application.

Updates can be deployed without reprinting or redistribution delays.

Structured chapters help readers follow logical progressions.

Uniform presentation helps maintain focus during extended study sessions.

Strong foundations support advanced skill development.

Clear organization guides readers from fundamentals to advanced topics.

Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards eBooks help learners manage complex information.

Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards eBooks can be updated to reflect evolving standards.

Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards eBooks provide measurable educational value.

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Entire libraries can be accessed from a single device.

Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards eBooks help learners organize complex ideas.

Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards eBooks align with modern productivity systems.

Structured chapters help readers follow logical progressions.

Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards eBooks support self-paced learning by allowing readers to control reading speed and progression.

The continued adoption of Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards eBooks reflects changing learning preferences in the digital age.

Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards eBooks can be updated to reflect evolving standards.

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Reliable content builds trust.

Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards eBooks support offline access once downloaded.

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The digital format of Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards eBooks allows rapid revision, correction, and content expansion.

Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards eBooks help establish sustainable learning routines by lowering the friction between intent and action. When information is immediately accessible, learners are more likely to follow through on their

educational goals.

The digital nature of Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards eBooks makes distribution fast and efficient, enabling instant access to updated information without the delays associated with print publishing.

Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards eBooks support standardized learning experiences.

The modular design of Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards eBooks allows readers to focus on specific sections.

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This format accommodates fragmented schedules while maintaining content depth and continuity.

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Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards eBooks align with modern digital productivity systems.

Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards eBooks support standardized learning experiences.

Clear goals improve consistency.

Many learners prefer Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards eBooks for their portability.

Ultimately, Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards eBooks represent an efficient, scalable, and sustainable approach to continuous learning.

Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards eBooks help learners manage long-term educational goals.

Accessible knowledge encourages lifelong learning.

Searchable content enhances productivity and supports just-in-time learning

scenarios.

Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards eBooks allow readers to highlight, annotate, and save important sections, improving retention and long-term understanding.

The digital format of Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards eBooks allows rapid revision, correction, and content expansion.

Sharing and Collaboration

Sharing and collaboration are increasingly important aspects of how Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards is used in modern digital environments. Whether for academic study, professional projects, or group learning, the ability to share content responsibly and collaborate effectively enhances understanding and productivity. However, it is essential that sharing practices always comply with legal and ethical standards, particularly regarding copyright and licensing.

When sharing Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards with peers, users should ensure that the copy being shared is legally permitted for distribution. Public domain works, open-access materials, or files explicitly licensed for sharing can be distributed freely. For paid or copyrighted editions, sharing should be limited to official links, publisher platforms, or access methods allowed by the license. Respecting copyright protects creators and ensures the continued availability of high-quality content.

Collaborative annotation is one of the most valuable features of digital documents. Using cloud-based PDF readers or note-sharing applications, multiple users can highlight text, add comments, and discuss specific sections of Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards in real time or asynchronously. This approach is particularly effective for study groups, research teams, and classroom environments, where shared insights deepen comprehension and encourage critical discussion.

Cloud platforms enable version consistency across collaborators. When everyone accesses the same file stored online, updates and annotations remain

synchronized, reducing confusion and duplication. Clear communication about annotation conventions—such as color coding or labeling comments—further improves collaboration and keeps discussions organized.

Best practices for collaborative use

To ensure smooth collaboration, users should define roles and expectations in advance. Establishing guidelines for who can edit, comment, or view the document prevents accidental changes or conflicts. Regular reviews of shared annotations help maintain clarity and ensure that discussions remain focused and productive.

Finding Updates

Staying informed about updates to *Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards* is essential for users who rely on accurate and current information. Unlike printed books, digital editions can be revised and updated without requiring a full reprint. Publishers may release corrected versions, expanded content, or supplemental materials that enhance the value of the original work.

Checking official publisher websites is the most reliable way to find updates. Publishers often announce new editions, revisions, or errata directly on their platforms. Subscribing to newsletters or update notifications ensures that users are alerted when new versions become available.

Digital marketplaces and eBook platforms may also provide update notifications. Some services automatically update purchased digital copies, while others allow users to download revised editions manually. Understanding how a particular platform handles updates helps users maintain the most current version of *Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards*.

In academic and professional contexts, using the latest edition is particularly important. Updated versions may include revised data, corrected errors, or new chapters that reflect recent developments. Relying on outdated information can lead to inaccuracies in research, teaching, or decision-making.

Managing multiple editions

When multiple editions of Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards are available, proper version management becomes crucial. Clearly labeling files with edition numbers or publication dates prevents confusion and ensures that references remain consistent. Archiving older versions separately allows users to retain historical context without cluttering active working files.

Device Flexibility

One of the greatest advantages of digital Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards is device flexibility. Users can access content across a wide range of devices, including smartphones, tablets, laptops, desktops, and dedicated e-readers. This flexibility supports learning and productivity in various environments, from classrooms and offices to travel and home settings.

Mobile devices offer convenience and portability, making it easy to read Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards on the go. Tablets provide a larger screen for comfortable reading and annotation, while computers offer advanced tools for research, editing, and multitasking. Dedicated e-readers deliver a distraction-free experience with long battery life and eye-friendly displays.

Format compatibility plays a key role in device flexibility. PDFs are widely supported across platforms, ensuring consistent formatting. ePub formats adapt to different screen sizes and allow customizable text settings. If a device does not support a particular format, conversion tools can bridge the gap and enable access without sacrificing usability.

Synchronizing progress across devices enhances continuity. Cloud-based reading apps often track bookmarks, highlights, and notes, allowing users to resume reading exactly where they left off. This seamless transition between devices improves efficiency and reduces friction in daily workflows.

Optimizing cross-device experiences

To maximize device flexibility, users should keep reading applications updated

and ensure that files are properly synced. Testing Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards on multiple devices helps identify formatting or compatibility issues early, preventing disruptions during critical use.

Security and access control across devices

Accessing Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards on multiple devices also requires attention to security. Using secure accounts, strong passwords, and trusted networks protects files from unauthorized access. Logging out of shared or public devices prevents accidental exposure of personal or proprietary information.

Encryption and secure cloud storage further enhance protection. Many platforms offer built-in security features that safeguard files while allowing convenient access across devices. Understanding and configuring these options helps balance accessibility with data protection.

Collaborative learning across platforms

Device flexibility supports collaboration by allowing participants to contribute using their preferred hardware. A student on a tablet, a researcher on a laptop, and a reviewer on a smartphone can all engage with Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards simultaneously. This inclusivity enhances participation and ensures that collaboration is not limited by device constraints.

Long-term usability and adaptability

As technology evolves, device flexibility ensures that Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards remains usable across new platforms and operating systems. Choosing widely supported formats and maintaining updated software extends the lifespan of digital content and protects long-term investments in learning and research materials.

Final thoughts on sharing, updates, and device flexibility of Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards

Effective sharing and collaboration, awareness of updates, and flexible device

access significantly enhance the value of Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards. By sharing responsibly, collaborating thoughtfully, staying current with revisions, and leveraging cross-device compatibility, users can fully integrate Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards into modern digital workflows. These practices support ethical use, accurate knowledge, and seamless access, making Alfie Kohn Punished By Rewards a powerful resource for individual and collective growth.