

Beit Or v'Shalom



BAR/BAT MITZVAH POLICY

Revised as at May 2019

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Beit Or v'Shalom Inc (BOvS) is overjoyed at being able to celebrate, along with the family, a time in the life of a young person as significant as a Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Providing a religious education and opportunity for inspiration and growth for our young people at such a pivotal point in their lives is one of our Congregation's most important objectives. In recognition of this, the Board hereby establishes this Bar/Bat Mitzvah Policy.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a process as much as it is an event. It affects both the young person and his/her family in profound and lasting ways.

Jewish tradition states that an individual should be ready to take their place in the community upon reaching the age of thirteen. By this age they are expected to know the difference between right and wrong and be able to take responsibility for their actions. We celebrate this "coming of age" as soon as possible after a boy or girl turns thirteen according to the Jewish calendar: the actual date depends on the student's readiness to publicly fulfil their responsibilities as a Jewish adult, as shown by their ability to participate in worship services.

In keeping with this tradition and the customs of the Australian Progressive Jewish community generally, this Policy is established so as to:

- (a) facilitate the Bar/Bat Mitzvah and their family having a meaningful and spiritually uplifting experience, both on the day and in the training period leading up to it;
- (b) identify the family's responsibilities in relation to both the student's training and the celebration of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah at a service;
- (c) prepare the boy or girl for future participation as a Jewish adult in the life of the Congregation by setting out uniform minimum requirements for a student to celebrate their Bar/Bat Mitzvah with Beit Or v'Shalom.

The Board has determined that it is necessary to meet certain standards – such as Hebrew and Jewish education, Hebrew proficiency and familiarity with the conduct of worship services – in order to become ready to take one's place in the community as a Bar/Bat Mitzvah and publicly mark the attainment of this in a service.

It is recognised that some candidates for Bar/Bat Mitzvah will have undertaken training outside of BOvS's Cheder and in such cases, the BOvS Board, acting in consultation with the Board approved Tutor, will determine, prior to finalising a date for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service, if it is appropriate to waive any of the usual requirements.

It is also recognised that for reasons of learning disability, distance, or other extenuating circumstances, some candidates will not be able to master all of the usual requirements. In such cases, acting on the advice of the Board approved Tutor the Board reserves the right to allow a Bar or Bat Mitzvah to be celebrated notwithstanding that the student has not met the usual requirements, provided that the student is capable of demonstrating, at a level that takes account of their individual circumstances, that they understand the nature of their obligations as a Jewish adult.

SECTION I: TRAINING AND PREPARATION

1. To be permitted to celebrate their Bar or Bat Mitzvah at BOvS, a student will normally:
 - (a) demonstrate their familiarity with important aspects of Jewish life, specifically our shared values, customs, and beliefs;
 - (b) demonstrate their knowledge of, and familiarity with, the main customs of observing Shabbat and Festivals as set out in Schedule 4 of this Policy;
 - (c) be able to follow a Shabbat morning service, as demonstrated by their ability to lead, join in with, and/or make the correct responses to, the prayers set out in Schedule 3 of this Policy;
 - (d) be able to lead the passages set out in Schedule 3 of this Policy, as read or chanted in a Shabbat morning service.

2. In order to fulfil the requirements set out in Paragraph 1, it is expected that during the two years prior to Bar or Bat Mitzvah, students will:
 - (a) regularly attend BOS Cheder, or equivalent (as determined by the Board);
 - (b) regularly attend Shabbat and Festival services and other BOvS and Jewish community activities;
 - (c) undertake Bar/Bat Mitzvah training with a Board-approved tutor, for a minimum period of at least 12 months;
 - (d) will be encouraged to successfully complete a mitzvot-based work program formulated by the Board in consultation with the family and Board approved Tutor, intended to aid the Bar or Bat Mitzvah in discovering Jewish practices which the student may wish to incorporate into their lives.

3. **Failure to complete any one of the requirements set out in Paragraphs 1 and 2 above may result in postponement of celebrating a Bar or Bat Mitzvah.**
4. In all cases, the Board will make the determination as to a student's readiness to celebrate their Bar or Bat Mitzvah. The Board will normally consult with any others involved in the student's training. In the event that the Board feels a student may not be ready in time, either (i) additional arrangements will be made to assist the student to be ready in time, or (ii) an alternative date will be set without causing undue inconvenience or hardship to the student and family. Should the Board be advised of the student's lack of readiness, the Board will make every effort to advise the family at least three (3) months prior to the planned Bar or Bat Mitzvah date.

SECTION II: THE BAR/BAT MITZVAH SERVICE

1. Congregational Services

- (a) Bar or Bat Mitzvah are celebrated at services that are on the Congregation's established calendar of services. The Board will determine the date on which each Bar/Bat Mitzvah is to be celebrated, in consultation with the family and the Board approved Tutor.
 - (b) A Bar/Bat Mitzvah will normally be celebrated on the first available service after the student reaches their thirteenth birthday according to the Jewish calendar, and subject to their readiness as set out in this Policy. So that a Bar/Bat Mitzvah will not be overshadowed by the celebration of a Festival, no Bar/Bat Mitzvah will be assigned on Passover, Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur. If a Bar/Bat Mitzvah would normally fall on one of these Festivals, the Board will advise the family to celebrate the event on a non-Festival Shabbat soon after.
 - (c) In the event that two or more students are turning thirteen at the same time, the Board, in consultation with the families and the Board, will determine the best way to ensure that the students have a meaningful Bar/Bat Mitzvah experience. This may mean sharing a service, or it may mean one or more students celebrating their Bar/Bat Mitzvah at a later service.
2. The arrangements for and conduct of Shabbat services on which a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is celebrated shall include, where practicable, the activities set out in Schedule 2.
 3. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah will normally lead, at a minimum, those portions of the service indicated in Schedule 3 and be familiar with the prayers, customs and practices set out in Schedule 4.

4. Torah Service

- (a) The Bar/Bat Mitzvah will usually chant the Maftir portion of the weekly Torah parashah in Hebrew, and the Hebrew blessings that accompany an aliyah. It is allowable for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah to act as Ba'al Kriah (Torah reader/chanter) for one or more other aliyot (call-ups). The Congregation will provide a Ba'al Kriah for those aliyot that the Bar/Bat Mitzvah does not read / chant.
- (b) It is usual to have a minimum of three aliyot (singular, "aliyah"), and a maximum of seven aliyot. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah will normally be called for the last aliyah (the Maftir), and his/her parents will normally be called for the second-last aliyah.
- (c) The Bar/Bat Mitzvah will read or chant the weekly Haftarah in Hebrew or read it in English (or a combination), and its accompanying blessings will be read or chanted by the Bar/Bat Mitzvah in Hebrew.
- (d) The Bar/Bat Mitzvah will prepare and deliver a speech (normally called a "drash") which he/she has written with the assistance of the Board approved tutor. The speech will include a summary of the Torah or Haftarah portions and a discussion on their relevance to modern life. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah speech must be provided to the Board approved tutor for review, comment and approval at least four (4) weeks prior to the service.

5. Photography

- (a) Photography can detract from the spiritual and emotional value of the service as well as providing an unnecessary distraction to those present (including the Bar/Bat Mitzvah and other service leaders). The policy on photography is determined accordingly.
- (b) Families wishing to take photographs will be permitted to do so until half an hour before the service is due to start. Still photography is not permitted during services.
- (c) A video/DVD camera may be used during the service provided that it is placed in a discreet position, does not make any noise, and does not need anyone to operate it during the service (that is, it needs to be set up and left to run by itself until the service ends). It is not possible to place any microphones away from the camera.
- (d) In the event of any questions on the day, the service leader will determine what is acceptable, having regard to this Policy. Some families may wish to give their Bar/Bat Mitzvah a tallit (prayer shawl) as part of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service. Arrangements will be made in the service for this presentation, usually by the parents but can also include grandparents.

6. Kiddush

It is usual to provide a Kiddush (refreshments immediately after the service). This is separate to any “invitation-only” function which you may wish to arrange for your guests later. All those present at the service should be expected to attend the Kiddush. The family is responsible for providing appropriate food and drink in consultation with the Guild.

SECTION III: ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

1. The family is expected to meet with a Board representative at least one year prior to the expected date of the child becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah to become familiar with both the process and the significance of Bar/Bat Mitzvah, the service and the family’s role in it.
2. Tutors: At this meeting the family will be advised of Board approved tutors for the purpose of Bar/Bat Mitzvah training. (All tutors must be approved by the Board, after evaluation based on the Tutor Assessment Guidelines attached as Schedule 7.) The family will make arrangements for tuition sessions with one of these tutors and arrangement for payment of tuition through the Board’s Treasurer. Families must consult with the Board if wishing to make tutoring arrangements other than with a Board approved tutor.
3. Financial Matters
 - (a) Only members of BOvS may reserve a date for a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Except where mitigating circumstances exist (which shall be determined by the Board in its sole discretion), a family must be a member of the Congregation in respect of, at a minimum, the financial year in which the Bar/Bat Mitzvah is to be celebrated.
 - (b) All payments due to BOvS, whether they be for membership, Cheder tuition or other goods or services, must be made in full no later than three months prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date and remain up-to-date to the planned Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Unless mitigating circumstances exist as determined by the Congregation’s Treasurer, the student will not be permitted to celebrate their Bar/Bat Mitzvah unless such payments have been made.
 - (c) The Congregation charges a non-refundable one-time fee of \$300 to reserve a date for a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. This fee also includes Cleaning, and supply of Wine, Juice and Challah for Kiddush but does not include the Service leader’s fee. No additional fee is owed if the date is later changed.

- (d) Unless agreed by the family at the time of reserving a date (see Section II, Paragraph 1(c) of this Policy), such a reservation means that no other Bar/Bat Mitzvah will be celebrated at that service. However, other celebrations such as pre-wedding call-ups or baby-namings may occur. If they do, such additional celebrations would be incorporated into the service, and done in such a way as to respect the importance of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. The inclusion of additional celebrations should be seen as enriching the day of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah by further demonstrating the student's connection to the fullness of Jewish life and community.
4. Upon confirming the date on which a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is to be celebrated, the Board Secretary, will advise the family of the Torah portion and Haftarah that are set for that particular week.
 5. All Bar/Bat Mitzvah services will take place in the congregation's synagogue.
Given that a Bar/Bat Mitzvah service publicly recognises for the first time the coming of age of a young Jew, this date will become part of the Congregation's calendar of services for the year. A Bar/Bat Mitzvah service is not to be considered a private event. Therefore, the family should expect, and it is perfectly proper, that the service will be open to, and will be attended by, people other than the family's invited guests. In particular, the Board will invite all members of the Congregation to attend the service and regular Kiddush.
 6. In the event that a student is not permitted to celebrate his/her Bar/Bat Mitzvah on the original date because he/she is not ready in time (as determined under Section I, part 3 of this Policy), the Congregation is not responsible for lost deposits, expenses or any other payments that may have been made.
 7. Should any aspect of this Policy change after the Board has approved a Bar/Bat Mitzvah and a date has been reserved, the family will be consulted and a decision will be made between the family and the Board as to whether the new aspect will apply.
 8. The family, in consultation with the Board will have the option to choose either a Minister or a lay service leader to lead the service where the Bar/Bat Mitzvah is to be celebrated. A separate fee, payable to the Minister, will be charged in the event that a Minister is chosen to lead the service. Should the family choose a lay service leader, to lead the service, a separate fee of \$150 will be payable to the Synagogue.

9. The family may engage a member of the Moetzah such as a retired Rabbi from interstate. The family shall be solely responsible for any costs associated with bringing in a service leader they engage, such as that person's professional fee, travel, and accommodation.

10. The Board will determine the prayer book to be used for the service. The family will advise the Board of the expected number of non-members attending the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service at least 3 months in advance so that the Board has sufficient time to borrow additional prayer books if necessary. Any costs associated with supplying additional prayer books (such as freight from an interstate congregation) will be borne by the family.

11. The family is responsible for paying for all flowers, decorations and printed materials to be used during the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service. Arrangements are to be made only after being approved by the Board to ensure that they are in keeping with Jewish custom and tradition.

12. Any and all activities, ceremonies or special ceremonies to be conducted during the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service must be approved in advance by the BOS Board.

13. Families are encouraged, and it is customary, to make a donation to the Congregation in honour of a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Guidance and options in this regard may be discussed with the Treasurer.

SCHEDULE 1 – BOYS BAR/BAT MITZVAH APPLICATION AND AGREEMENT

Child's name (English and Hebrew):

Parent/Guardians' names:

_____ and _____

Child's Date of Birth:

What time of day was child born? (Circle one): Before sunset / After sunset

Preferred date of Bar/Bat Mitzvah service: _____, 20____

Address:

Telephone:

Parent/Guardian 1: (H) _____ (MOB) _____ (W)

Parent/Guardian 2: (H) _____ (MOB) _____ (W)

Email:

Parent/Guardian 1: _____

Parent/Guardian 2: _____

Please indicate your preferred contact:

Preliminary estimated number of non-Congregational members to be invited:

We have read and understood the BOvS Bar/Bat Mitzvah Policy and agree to follow it.

Parent/Guardian 1: Date:

(signature)

Parent/Guardian 2: Date:

(signature)

Child: Date:

(signature)

Office Use Only

Approved date of Bar/Bat Mitzvah _____ 20__ Approved by Board on _____ 20__

\$300 reservation fee invoice issued (date): _____ 20 Payment received (date): _____ 20

Receipt No: _____

SCHEDULE 2 – SHABBAT SERVICES ON WHICH A BAR/BAT MITZVAH IS CELEBRATED

On those Shabbat services where a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is celebrated the following additional matters should be taken into account.

A Bar/Bat Mitzvah requires a team of people, both before and during the service. Teamwork assists in ensuring a seamless operation.

There should be two service leaders (if both lay leaders), a Gabbai to assist with the Torah service, and one or two Shammaashim to guide people receiving honours or otherwise involved in the service.

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutor and/or service leader should have regard for the following:

- Encourage the family to prepare, print and distribute a welcome leaflet to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah for those attending – and as a souvenir. BOS can provide parents with a template if desired.
- At the Hakafah part of the service, pass the sefer Torah from generation to generation, if desired by the family.
- Bar/Bat Mitzvah to carry sefer Torah during the Hakafah or to follow an adult who has been given that honour.
- Maximise the amount of Hebrew the Bar/Bat Mitzvah reads, subject to their learning abilities.
- Use a Gabbai for call-ups and checking reading.
- Use all seven aliyot including Bar/Bat Mitzvah maftir (for both family and Congregational members to be called up).
- Select a Maftir for Bar/Bat Mitzvah in consultation with the Board, that is a separate portion (not a repeat of the previous portion).
- Candy throwing at the Bar/Bat Mitzvah (where desired) should immediately follow the Bar/Bat Mitzvah's completion of the Drash.
- Encourage a mitzvah project to be undertaken, as per the Policy. This could then be referred to by the service leader in addressing the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

- Provide a time during the service for the President to present certificate/s – usually after the drash and candy-throwing.
- Personal benediction by service leader or Cohen to Bar/Bat Mitzvah and family – possibly combine this with a tallit/canopy occasion.
- Sing *Simantov u Mazeltov* (if it is to be sung) clearly and with gusto/volume – know the words.
- Leave a gap for Congregational announcements – after Mourners' Kaddish.
- Ensure Bar Mitzvah continues to wear kippa during the Kiddush.
- Any proposed gifts to the Congregation by the parents/family should be discussed/approved well in advance by the President/Board.

SCHEDULE 3 – PORTIONS OF THE SERVICE TO BE LED BY BAR/BAT MITZVAH

Minimum Required Portions of Service to be led by the Bar/Bat Mitzvah are:

- Shema/V'ahavta
- Blessings for Torah and Haftarah
- Maftir
- Haftarah
- Summary and comment on Torah / Haftarah

Portions of service that the Bar/Bat Mitzvah should be able to join in with, and may lead:

Mah Tovu

Chatsi Kaddish

Barchu

Mi Chamocho

Amidah

Mourner's Kaddish

Adon Olam.

Any portion that is usually read in English.

SCHEDULE 4 – MAIN CUSTOMS OF OBSERVING SHABBAT AND FESTIVALS

Additional prayers that the student will be encouraged to become familiar with:

For Friday night:

Candle lighting, blessing the children and home Kiddush service

L'chah Dodi

Shalom Aleichem

For Saturday morning:

Saturday morning Kiddush

For Saturday evening:

Havdalah

Familiarity with practices relating to traditional notions of Shabbat “rest” such as avoiding handling money, electrical devices etc, and how they apply within Progressive Jewish practice.

Awareness of Shabbat customs and traditions.

Other Customs:

Familiarity with the prayers and customs associated with:

Brachot – bread, cakes, wine, fruit, vegetables and drinks.

- Birkat HaMazon / Grace after meals
- Shehechyanu – new / special occasions
- Passover Seder
- Chanukah home service (candle lighting, brachot, Ma'oz Tsur)
- Purim
- Rosh Hashanah/Yom Kippur
- Sukkot
- Simchat Torah

SCHEDULE 5 – PARTICIPATION OF FAMILY AND FRIENDS IN BAR/BAT MITZVAH

There are many ways to honour family and friends during the service, although there are rules (established over centuries of tradition and Jewish law) as to who may enjoy which honours. The honour of reading the final instalment of the day's Torah portion (known as the Maftir), and the day's reading from the Prophets, known as the Haftarah, along with their associated blessings, are reserved for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

The honour of being given an Aliyah, i.e. making blessings over reading the Torah, are normally given to the Jewish parents, grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles, and/or close family friends of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

A non Jewish parent will be allowed to stand beside a Jewish parent who is given an Aliya, but will not be called on to join the blessing.

Other honours include taking the Torah from the Holy Ark, carrying it in procession through the Congregation, the honours of Hagbahah and G'lilah (lifting, and dressing of the Torah after the Torah reading); these may, if you wish, be given to Jewish family members and/or close Jewish family friends. Hagbahah will ordinarily be taken by a Jewish adult who has sufficient physical strength to comfortably raise the Torah scroll, open it about half a metre (three columns of writing), and display it to the Congregation while holding it aloft. Assigning the honour of Hagbahah should take into consideration that a Torah scroll can be heavy. G'lilah is normally given to Jews who have not yet reached 13 years of age, but may be given to one or more Jewish adults. (G'lilah is the only honour that may be given to someone who is not yet a Bar/Bat Mitzvah).

Non-Jewish family members are welcome to participate in the following ways in a service. A non-Jewish family member may read the prayer for our Country (towards the end of the Torah service), and a non-Jewish parent may briefly address their child during the service. Non-Jewish parent/grandparents are invited to stand under tallit when the family receives a blessing.

In all cases, it is customary to invite an honouree well in advance as some of your guests may prefer to decline the honour and it would need reassigning. The Board approved Tutor is able to help you work out which honours would best fit which of your guests, and help ensure that all whom you wish to honour are able to be given an appropriate one, should you wish such assistance. Do not be concerned if you cannot assign all available honours to your family and friends; it is customary for some to be assigned to regular congregants.

SCHEDULE 6 – BAR/BAT MITZVAH CHECKLIST

With all the excitement of preparing for your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah, we realise that it can be difficult to remember all of the important obligations associated with this joyous occasion. We hope this checklist will serve as a simple reminder of the significant dates and events that need your attention.

AT LEAST TWO YEARS BEFORE BAR/BAT MITZVAH

___ Make suitable arrangements for your child's Jewish education (e.g. cheder attendance)

AT LEAST ONE YEAR BEFORE BAR/BAT MITZVAH

___ Be sure that you have received and signed the BOS Bar/Bat Mitzvah Application and Agreement and made the payment to reserve the date.

___ Meet with the Board's representative to discuss the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Policy requirements and receive information about available tutoring and set dates for review of student progress (such meetings to be repeated at least every 3 months.)

___ If not already doing so, start attending our Congregation services as a family. It is expected that your child will regularly attend Shabbat and Festival services (a minimum of 2 per month) and other Beit Or v'Shalom and Jewish community activities.

___ Arrange the starting date of your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah lessons with either the Board approved Tutor.

AT LEAST THREE MONTHS BEFORE BAR/BAT MITZVAH

___ Ensure all financial obligations have been met. This includes booking fee and membership fees. (Please contact the Treasurer to confidentially discuss any financial difficulties.)

___ Arrange for the Saturday morning Kiddush. You should seek advice from the BOS Guild to ensure that the food you provide meets our guidelines, particularly in regard to traditional Jewish dietary restrictions. Should you provide food that does not meet our guidelines, it will not be put out (especially shellfish, pig products, or any dish that combines meat and dairy).

___ Confirm the requirement that your photographer contact BOS before the day of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah to learn the rules for taking photographs/video during the service.

___ Order flower arrangements, if required for the service, and ensure someone is available to open the building in time for delivery.

AT LEAST ONE MONTH BEFORE BAR/BAT MITZVAH

- ___ Ensure that your child's speech (drash) has been checked by the Board approved tutor.

- ___ Prepare the BOS information sheet, provided by the Board approved tutor, regarding honours/participants in the service. Make sure those persons having aliyot (call-ups) are familiar with the prayers (request transliteration if necessary).

ONE WEEK BEFORE BAR/BAT MITZVAH

- ___ Ensure that flowers are delivered at least 1 hour before the start of the service.

- ___ Ensure that Saturday Kiddush refreshments are delivered and laid out at least ½ an hour before the start of the service. This cannot be attended to during the conduct of the service.

- ___ Kiddush can be set out by hired staff who are not attending the service as long as their work doesn't disrupt the service e.g. It's in another room

- ___ Ensure your photographer has reviewed the rules for taking photographs/videos with BOS.

SCHEDULE 7 – TUTOR ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES

To be recommended as a Bar/Bat Mitzvah Tutor for BOS, an applicant will meet the following requirements:

1. Demonstrated ability to read Hebrew with sufficient fluency to lead a service and minimum 97% accuracy (i.e. in a passage of 100 words of liturgical Hebrew, the Applicant will make no more than 3 uncorrected errors).
2. Demonstrated ability to read/chant Torah and Haftarah fluently, with minimum 97% accuracy in the Hebrew text.
3. Demonstrated ability to formulate a suitable course of lessons that will give a given student the technical skills needed to meet the Congregation's requirements to celebrate Bar/Bat Mitzvah.
4. Demonstrated commitment to living Jewish values, particularly as these are expressed within Progressive Judaism.
5. Demonstrated understanding of the Congregation's Policies in relation to Bar/Bat Mitzvah training, and Ritual practice (especially Shabbat services)
6. Must be current holder of Queensland Blue Card and Positive Notice Letter to work with minors, or equivalent.

If a candidate fails the assessment the Board shall advise them in which areas they need to improve, and they can apply for re-assessment at any time, but the Board can refuse to assess the same candidate more than 3 times in any 12 month period. In all cases, the Board retains the right to refuse approval to an applicant without any need to give reasons.

The Blue Card requirement can only be satisfied by producing correct documentation to the Congregation. Other Guidelines can be satisfied in a variety of ways, which (at the Board's discretion) may include any of the following:

Skill tests (see below)

Interview

References from other congregations and/or bar/bat mitzvah families

Skill Tests may include:

- Read a prepared passage of Liturgical Hebrew
- Chant a prepared passage of Liturgical Hebrew if able.
- Role-play a "mini-lesson" of teaching a short passage with the Board representative taking the part of a new "student".
- Such other tests as may seem reasonable to give an Applicant the best chance to prove themselves fit.

These Guidelines do not assess an applicant's ability to work with students who have learning disabilities. While some tutors may be better able to work with such students, lack of formal skills or training in this area does not preclude someone from being an approved Tutor.