

MERCURY: A multilinear Polynomial Commitment Scheme with constant proof size and no prover FFTs

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February 26, 2025

Abstract

We construct a polynomial commitment scheme for multilinear polynomials of size n where constructing an opening proof requires $O(n)$ field operations, and $2n + O(\sqrt{n})$ scalar multiplications. Moreover, the opening proof consists of a constant number of field elements. This is a significant improvement over previous works which would require either

1. $O(n \log n)$ field operations; or
2. $O(\log n)$ size opening proof.

The main technical component is a new method of verifiably folding a witness via univariate polynomial division. As opposed to previous methods, the proof size and prover time remain constant *regardless of the folding factor*.

1 Introduction

1.1 Our results

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2 Overview of technique

Remark 2.1. *In this overview, we use some of the notation defined in Sections 3.1 and 3.2.*

Table 1: Comparison of pairing-based ml-PCS.

Scheme	Proof size	Prover Work	Verifier Work
univariate-based e.g. [?]	$O(1) \mathbb{F}$	$O(n \log n) \mathbb{F}, O(n) \mathbb{G}$	$O(\log n) \mathbb{F}, O(1) \mathbb{G}$
gemini [gem]	$O(\log n) \mathbb{F}$	$O(n) \mathbb{F}, 3n \mathbb{G}$	$O(n^2) \mathbb{F}, \mathbb{G} 1$
zeromorph [zer]	$O(\log n) \mathbb{F}$	$O(n) \mathbb{F}, 2.5n \mathbb{G}$	$6n \mathbb{G} 1, n \mathbb{G} 2, O(n \log^2 n) \mathbb{F}$
MERCURY [?]	$O(1) \mathbb{F}$	$O(n) \mathbb{F}, 2n + O(\sqrt{n}) \mathbb{G}$	$13n \mathbb{G} 1, n \mathbb{G} 2, O(n \log^2 n) \mathbb{F}$

Our technique is best thought of as an improvement of the ml-PCS from **gemini** [gem]. Let us start by recalling how **gemini** works. **gemini** commits to the multilinear function as a *univariate* KZG commitment [KZG10]. Specifically, suppose given a vector $f \in \mathbb{F}^n$, and a structured reference string of elements $\{[x^i]_1\}_{i < n}$. **gemini** outputs $\sum_{i < n} f_i [x^i]_1$ as a commitment to the multilinear function $M(X_0, \dots, X_{s-1}) = \sum_{i < n} \mathbf{eq}(i, u) f_i$ where $u \in \mathbb{F}^{\log n}$. Now suppose prover **P** wants to convince verifier **V** that $M(u) = v$, for some $u = (u_0, \dots, u_{s-1})$. **P** will send commitments $\mathbf{cm}_1, \dots, \mathbf{cm}_s$ to the s incremental restrictions leading to evaluation at u . Namely, to $M_1(u_0, X_1, \dots, X_{s-1})$, $M_2(u_0, u_1, X_2, \dots, X_{s-1})$, \dots , $M_s(u_0, \dots, u_{s-1})$. Assuming **P** sent commitments to the correct functions, all that is needed is to check that \mathbf{cm}_s is the commitment to the constant v . Of course, the technically interesting part is to prove the commitments *are* to the correct functions! For this purpose, **gemini** exploits a connection between M and its corresponding univariate $f(X)$: Write $f(X) = f_0(X^2) + X f_1(X^2)$, for $f_0(X), f_1(X)$ of degree $< n/2$. Let $f_{u_1}(X)$ be the univariate corresponding to M_1 defined above. Then, we have

$$f_{u_1}(X) = (1 - u_1) f_0(X) + u_1 f_1(X).$$

Additionally, we can evaluate f_0 and f_1 via f using the equations

$$f_0(X^2) = (f(X) + f(-X))/2, f_1(X^2) = (f(X) - f(-X))/2X$$

Thus, we can perform consistency checks between each pair $\mathbf{cm}_{i-1}, \mathbf{cm}_i$ showing it is the correct restriction to the next variable. Of course, we get $O(s) = O(\log n)$ proof length due to sending this incremental sequence of restrictions. Here is a first idea on how to reduce proof length (without increasing prover time). Protocols based on univariate polynomials allow us to do multilinear evaluation in $O(n \log n)$ prover time (see e.g. Section 5 of [?]), with constant proof size. Choose a parameter t and set $b = 2^t$. We can run *only the first t rounds* of **gemini**, reaching a restricted multilinear on $n - t$ variables. If $n' = n/(2^t) \leq n/\log n$, we can now apply a univariate protocol running in $O(n' \log n')$ time, running This still doesn't take us to overall constant proof size - as we need to use a super-constant t to reach such n' . (For us $t = \log n/2$ will be optimal, although $t \geq \log \log n$ suffices here.)

This raises the question - can we “skip” the intermediate **gemini** rounds and send *only* the commitment \mathbf{cm}_t , and prove it is consistent with the original \mathbf{cm} ? Extrapolating the **gemini** strategy in the natural way, we get the answer - yes, but not with constant proof size: We can decompose f into b polynomials of degree $< n/b$: $f(X) = \sum_{0 \leq i < b} X^i f_i(X^b)$.

As in the $b = 2$ case, one can show the univariate $f'(X)$ corresponding to M_t will be a linear combination of the $\{f_i(X)\}$. Moreover, evaluating the f_i using f (for the consistency check) can be done. However, it requires b evaluations of f . Specifically, f_i at (r^b) can be evaluated using f at $\{r, r\omega, \dots, r\omega^{t-1}\}$ for a primitive t 'th root of unity ω .

Our central innovation is a different way to prove cm_t is correct *with* constant proof size. Take any $\alpha \in \mathbb{F}$, and let $g(X) = f(X) \bmod X^b - \alpha$. Then,

$$g(X) = \sum_{0 \leq i < b} X^i f_i(\alpha)$$

The restricted polynomial we are interested in

$$f'(X) = \sum_{0 \leq i < b} \mathbf{eq}(i, u_1) f_i(X)$$

Proving correctness of g can be done via a quotient. What remains is to connect g and f' . We can use KZG [KZG10] to get $f'(\alpha) = \sum_{0 \leq i < b} \mathbf{eq}(i, u_1) f_i(X)$. Now we can get the same evaluation via evaluating g as a multilinear!

Comparison to sumcheck It is instructive to see what happens if we try to get a similar result via a modification of the sumcheck protocol [?]. Note first that indeed a multilinear evaluation can be seen as a sum over the committed function multiplied by the \mathbf{eq} function:

$$\hat{f}(u) = \sum_{b \in B_n} \mathbf{eq}(b, u) \hat{f}(b).$$

The classic sumcheck protocol, like **gemini**, works by $\log n$ reductions of the domain size by a factor of two; each round fixing one more variable of the summed function. In the above spirit, we could look at a modified sumcheck protocol, where the first variable ranges over a domain of super-constant size b . The first round univariate P_1 would thus have degree $2b$ in our case. We can send a commitment to it rather than its coefficients as usually done to maintain constant proof size. However, *computing* P_1 would require superlinear time $O(n \log b)$ - as we need to perform a b -size FFT for n/b values of the second variable appearing in the sum.

3 Preliminaries

3.1 Terminology and conventions

We work with integer parameter n that we'll assume throughout the paper is of the form $n = 2^{2t}$ for integer $t > 0$. We'll denote its square root by $b := 2^t = \sqrt{n}$. We index vectors starting from zero. For example, for $g \in \mathbb{F}^b$ we have $g = (g_0, \dots, g_{b-1})$. We associate vectors with univariate polynomials in the following natural way: Given $g \in \mathbb{F}^b$ we denote $g(X) := \sum_{0 \leq i < b} g_i X^i$.

We make the convention that integer ranges in sums begin at zero if not specified otherwise. Thus, we write $g(X) = \sum_{i < b} g_i X^i$.

We assume vectors of size n are indexed by two indices ranging over $\{0, \dots, b-1\}$. Thus, for $f \in \mathbb{F}^n$, we have $f = (f_{0,0}, \dots, f_{0,b-1}, \dots, f_{b-1,0}, \dots, f_{b-1,b-1})$. Accordingly, for $0 \leq i < b$, we denote by f_i the vector $(f_{i,0}, \dots, f_{i,b-1})$.

In particular, for $f \in \mathbb{F}^n$ we have under these notations that

$$f(X) := \sum_{i < b} X^i f_i(X^b) = \sum_{i < b} \sum_{j < b} f_{i,j} X^{i+j \cdot b}$$

3.2 Multilinear polynomials

Let $n = 2^{2t}$. We define the well-known **eq** multilinear polynomial in $4t$ variables.

$$\mathbf{eq}(x, y) := \prod_{i=1}^t (x_i y_i + (1 - x_i)(1 - y_i))$$

We have for $x, y \in \{0, 1\}^{2t}$, $\mathbf{eq}(x, y) = 1$ when $x = y$ and $\mathbf{eq}(x, y) = 0$ otherwise.

We use the convention that an integer $0 \leq i < n$ can be used as an input to **eq** by interpreting i as its binary representation. Namely, for $0 \leq i < n$, $u \in \mathbb{F}^t$, $\mathbf{eq}(i, u) := \mathbf{eq}(i_1, \dots, i_t, u)$ where $i = \sum_{j \in [t]} i_j 2^{j-1}$.

For $a \in \mathbb{F}^n$, we define $\mathbf{ml}(f)$ to be the multilinear polynomial obtaining f 's values on the boolean cube. Namely,

$$\mathbf{ml}(a)(X_1, \dots, X_t) := \sum_{i < n} \mathbf{eq}(i, X_1, \dots, X_t) \cdot a_i.$$

3.3 The algebraic group model

We introduce some terminology from [GWC19] to capture analysis in the Algebraic Group Model of Fuchsbauer, Kiltz and Loss [FKL18].

In our protocols, by an *algebraic adversary* \mathcal{A} in an SRS-based protocol we mean a $\text{poly}(\lambda)$ -time algorithm which satisfies the following.

- For $i \in \{1, 2\}$, whenever \mathcal{A} outputs an element $A \in \mathbb{G}_i$, it also outputs a vector v over \mathbb{F} such that $A = \langle v, \mathbf{srs}_i \rangle$.

First we say our **srs** has *degree* Q if all elements of \mathbf{srs}_i are of the form $[f(x)]_i$ for $f \in \mathbb{F}_{<Q+1}[X]$ and uniform $x \in \mathbb{F}$. In the following discussion let us assume we are executing a protocol with a degree Q SRS, and denote by $f_{i,j}$ the corresponding polynomial for the j 'th element of \mathbf{srs}_i .

Denote by a, b the vectors of \mathbb{F} -elements whose encodings in $\mathbb{G}_1, \mathbb{G}_2$ an algebraic adversary \mathcal{A} outputs during a protocol execution; e.g., the j 'th \mathbb{G}_1 element output by \mathcal{A} is $[a_j]_1$.

By a “real pairing check” we mean a check of the form

$$(a \cdot T_1) \cdot (T_2 \cdot b) = 0$$

for some matrices T_1, T_2 over \mathbb{F} . Note that such a check can indeed be done efficiently given the encoded elements and the pairing function $e : \mathbb{G}_1 \times \mathbb{G}_2 \rightarrow \mathbb{G}_t$.

Given such a “real pairing check”, and the adversary \mathcal{A} and protocol execution during which the elements were output, define the corresponding “ideal check” as follows. Since \mathcal{A} is algebraic when he outputs $[a_j]_i$, he also outputs a vector v such that, from linearity, $a_j = \sum v_\ell f_{i,\ell}(x) = R_{i,j}(x)$ for $R_{i,j}(X) := \sum v_\ell f_{i,\ell}(X)$. Denote, for $i \in \{1, 2\}$ the vector of polynomials $R_i = (R_{i,j})_j$. The corresponding ideal check, checks as a polynomial identity whether

$$(R_1 \cdot T_1) \cdot (T_2 \cdot R_2) \equiv 0$$

The following lemma is inspired by [FKL18]’s analysis of [Gro16], and tells us that for soundness analysis against algebraic adversaries it suffices to look at ideal checks. Before stating the lemma we define the Q -DLOG assumption similarly to [FKL18].

Definition 3.1. Fix integer Q . The Q -DLOG assumption for $(\mathbb{G}_1, \mathbb{G}_2)$ states that given

$$[1]_1, [x]_1, \dots, [x^Q]_1, [1]_2, [x]_2, \dots, [x^Q]_2$$

for uniformly chosen $x \in \mathbb{F}$, the probability of an efficient \mathcal{A} outputting x is $\text{negl}(\lambda)$.

Lemma 3.2. Assume the Q -DLOG for $(\mathbb{G}_1, \mathbb{G}_2)$. Given an algebraic adversary \mathcal{A} participating in a protocol with a degree Q SRS, the probability of any real pairing check passing is larger by at most an additive $\text{negl}(\lambda)$ factor than the probability the corresponding ideal check holds.

See [GWC19] for the proof.

3.4 Polynomial commitment schemes for multilinear polynomials

Definition 3.3. Let $n = 2^t$. A multi-linear polynomial commitment scheme (ml-PCS) consists of

- $\text{gen}(n)$ - a randomized algorithm that outputs an SRS srs .
- $\text{com}(f, \text{srs})$ - that given a polynomial $f \in \mathbb{F}^n$ returns a commitment cm to f .
- A public coin protocol $\text{open}(\text{cm}, n, u, v)$ between parties \mathbf{P} and \mathbf{V} . \mathbf{P} is given $f \in \mathbb{F}^n$. \mathbf{P} and \mathbf{V} are both given integer n , cm - the purported commitment to f , $u \in \mathbb{F}^t$ and $v \in \mathbb{F}$ - the purported value $\text{ml}(f)(u)$.

such that

- **Completeness:** Suppose that $\text{cm} = \text{com}(f, \text{srs})$. Then if open is run correctly with values $n, \text{cm}, u, v = \text{ml}(f)(u)$, \mathbf{V} outputs *accept* with probability one.
- **Knowledge soundness in the algebraic group model:** There exists an efficient E such that for any algebraic adversary \mathcal{A} the probability of \mathcal{A} winning the following game is $\text{negl}(\lambda)$ over the randomness of \mathcal{A} and gen .

1. Given srs , \mathcal{A} outputs n, cm .
2. E , given access to the messages of \mathcal{A} during the previous step, outputs $f \in \mathbb{F}^n$.
3. \mathcal{A} outputs $u \in \mathbb{F}^t$, $v \in \mathbb{F}$.
4. \mathcal{A} takes the part of \mathbf{P} in the protocol `open` with inputs n, cm, u, v .
5. \mathcal{A} wins if
 - \mathbf{V} outputs *accept* at the end of the protocol.
 - $\text{ml}(f)(u) \neq v$.

4 Components

In this section we go over known components (with some new optimizations), that will be used in our main protocol in the next section.

4.1 Inner products in $O(b \log b)$ time.

For polynomials $g_1(X) = \sum_{i=0}^{d_1} a_i X^i$, $g_2 = \sum_{i=0}^{d_2} b_i X^i$ in $\mathbb{F}[X]$. We define $\langle g_1, g_2 \rangle$ to be $\sum_{i=0}^d a_i b_i$ where $d := \min\{d_1, d_2\}$. We present the following protocol to verify $\langle g_1, g_2 \rangle$ as \mathbf{A} convenient way to get inner products in monomial similar to [BCC⁺16, MBKM19].

Batching inner product checks If we wish to show that $\langle g_1, g_2 \rangle = v_1$ and $\langle h_1, h_2 \rangle = v_2$.

1. \mathbf{V} chooses random $\gamma \in \mathbb{F}$
2. \mathbf{P} sends $S \in \mathbb{F}[X]$ such that

$$g_1(X)g_2(1/X) + g_1(X)g_2(1/X) + \gamma(h_1(X)h_2(1/X) + h_1(1/X)h_2(X)) = 2(v_1 + \gamma v_2) + X \cdot S(X)$$

4.2 Multi-linear evaluations as inner products of univariate polynomials.

For $u \in \{0, 1\}^t$ define the polynomial $P_u = \sum_{i < b} \mathbf{eq}(i, u) X^i$. Thus, we have for $g \in \mathbb{F}_{<b}[X]$, $\text{ml}((g)) = \langle g, P_u \rangle$.

A verifier Inner products.

4.3 Degree checks

This is based on Thakur [Tha23].

4.4 Batching

Common practice to obtain an inner product of tw

Degree checks

5 Univariate division

Claim 5.1. Fix integers $b > 0$ and let $n = b^2$. Fix $\alpha \in \mathbb{F}$, and $f(X) \in \mathbb{F}_{<n}[X]$. Let $f_0(X), \dots, f_{b-1}(X) \in \mathbb{F}_{<b}[X]$ be such that $f(X) = \sum_{i<b} X^i f_i(X^b)$. Let $g(X) \in \mathbb{F}_{<b}[X], q(X) \in \mathbb{F}[X]$ be such that

$$f(X) = (X^b - \alpha) \cdot q(X) + g(X).$$

Then,

1. $g(X) = \sum_{i<b} X^i f_i(\alpha)$.
2. The coefficients of $q(X)$ can be computed in $O(n)$ \mathbb{F} -operations.

Proof. To see the first item, note that reduction mod $X^b - \alpha$ corresponds to substituting α into X^b inside each $f_i(X^b)$ in the expression $\sum_{i<b} X^i f_i(X^b)$. We proceed to the computation of $q(X)$. We compute for each $0 \leq i < b$, the coefficients of the quotient $q_i(X) \in \mathbb{F}[X]$ such that

$$f_i(X) = q_i(X)(X - \alpha) + f_i(\alpha).$$

Using Horner's method for division by the linear polynomial $X - \alpha$ this requires only n multiplications and additions in \mathbb{F} . Now, we have that

$$f(X) = \sum_{i<b} X^i f_i(X^b) = \sum_{i<b} X^i \left(q_i(X^b)(X^b - \alpha) + f_i(\alpha) \right) = q(X)(X^b - \alpha) + g(X),$$

for $q(X) := \sum_{i<b} X^i q_i(X^b)$. Thus, the coefficients of $q(X)$ are simply the interleaving of the coefficients of the $\{q_i(X)\}$. \square

6 Main Construction

MERCURY is the tuple $(\text{gen}, \text{com}, \text{open})$ described next.

gen(n): Choose random $x \in \mathbb{F}$ and outputs $\{[1]_1, [x]_1, \dots, [x^{n-1}]_1, [1]_2, [x]_2\}$

com(n, f, srs): Output $\sum_{i<b} \sum_{j<b} f_{i,j} \cdot [x^{i \cdot b + j}]_1$.

open($n, \text{cm}, u, v; f$):

1. Committing to partial sums:
 - (a) **P** computes the polynomial to $h(X) := \sum_{i<b} \mathbf{eq}(i, u_1) f_i(X)$. Note that the coefficient of X^j in $h(X)$ is $\sum_{i<b} \mathbf{eq}(i, u_1) f_{i,j}$ - hence we think of it as a commitment to partial sums.

- (b) \mathbf{P} computes and sends $\mathbf{h} := [h(x)]_1$.
2. Committing to “folded” polynomial g :
- (a) \mathbf{V} sends random $\alpha \in \mathbb{F}$.
- (b) \mathbf{P} computes polynomials $g(X) \in \mathbb{F}_{<b}[X]$ and $q(X) \in \mathbb{F}[X]$ such that
- $$f(X) = (X^b - \alpha) \cdot q(X) + g(X).$$
- (c) \mathbf{P} computes and sends $\mathbf{q} := [q(x)]_1$ and $\mathbf{g} := [g(x)]_1$.
3. Sending proofs of correctness for h and the degree of g :
- (a) \mathbf{V} sends a random batching challenge $\gamma \in \mathbb{F}$.
- (b) \mathbf{P} computes and sends $\mathbf{s} = [S(x)]_1$ where $S(X) \in \mathbb{F}[X]$ is such that
- $$\begin{aligned} g(X)P_{u_1}(1/X) + g(1/X)P_{u_1}(X) + \gamma \cdot (h(X)P_{u_2}(1/X) + h(1/X)P_{u_2}(X)) \\ = h(\alpha) + \gamma \cdot v + X \cdot S(X) + (1/X)S(1/X). \end{aligned}$$
- (c) \mathbf{P} computes and sends $\mathbf{d} := [D(x)]_1$ where
- $$D(X) := X^{b-1}g(1/X).$$
4. KZG evaluations:
- (a) \mathbf{V} sends a random evaluation challenge $\mathfrak{z} \in \mathbb{F}$.
- (b) \mathbf{P} sends the values $f_{\mathfrak{z}} := f(\mathfrak{z}), q_{\mathfrak{z}} := q(\mathfrak{z}), g_{\mathfrak{z}} := g(\mathfrak{z}), \bar{g}_{\mathfrak{z}} := g(1/\mathfrak{z}), h_{\mathfrak{z}} := h(\mathfrak{z}), \bar{h}_{\mathfrak{z}} := h(1/\mathfrak{z}), h_{\alpha} := h(\alpha), s_{\mathfrak{z}} := s(\mathfrak{z}), \bar{s}_{\mathfrak{z}} := s(1/\mathfrak{z}), D_{\mathfrak{z}} := D(\mathfrak{z})$.
- (c) \mathbf{V} sends a random KZG batching challenge $\eta \in \mathbb{F}$.
- (d) \mathbf{P} computes and sends the KZG opening proof $\pi_{\mathfrak{z}}$ for the values $f_{\mathfrak{z}}$ and $q_{\mathfrak{z}}$. That is $\pi_{\mathfrak{z}} := [H(x)]_1$ for
- $$H(X) := \frac{f(X) - f(\mathfrak{z}) + \eta(q(X) - q(\mathfrak{z}))}{X - \mathfrak{z}}.$$
- (e) \mathbf{P} computes and send a batched KZG opening proof π' for the rest of the values sent in step 4b, as described in Section 4 of [?].
- (f) \mathbf{V} checks the proof $\pi_{\mathfrak{z}}$ as in [KZG10]:
- $$e(\mathbf{cm} - [f_{\mathfrak{z}}]_1 + \eta(\mathbf{q} - [q_{\mathfrak{z}}]_1), [1]_2) = e(\pi_{\mathfrak{z}}, [x]_2).$$
- (g) \mathbf{V} checks the opening proof π' as described in [?].
- (h) \mathbf{V} checks the equation
- $$g_{\mathfrak{z}}P_{u_1}(1/\mathfrak{z}) + \bar{g}_{\mathfrak{z}}P_{u_1}(\mathfrak{z}) + \gamma(h_{\mathfrak{z}}P_{u_2}(1/\mathfrak{z}) + \bar{h}_{\mathfrak{z}}P_{u_2}(\mathfrak{z})) = h_{\alpha} + \gamma v + \mathfrak{z}s_{\mathfrak{z}} + (1/\mathfrak{z})\bar{s}_{\mathfrak{z}}.$$
- (i) \mathbf{V} checks the equation $D_{\mathfrak{z}} = \mathfrak{z}^{b-1}\bar{g}_{\mathfrak{z}}$.
- (j) If one of the checks in steps 4f-4i fails \mathbf{V} outputs *reject*. Otherwise \mathbf{V} outputs *accept*.

Runtime of \mathbf{P} : Computing $q(X)$ in step 2b requires $O(n)$ operations by Claim 5.1. Computing \mathbf{q} and π_3 requires two MSMs of size n . All other steps are on polynomials of size $O(b) = O(\sqrt{n})$.

Proving knowledge soundness: Let \mathcal{A} be an efficient algebraic adversary participating in the Knowledge Soundness game from Definition ???. We show its probability of winning the game is $\text{negl}(\lambda)$. Let $f \in \mathbb{F}_{<N}[X]$ be the polynomial sent by \mathcal{A} in the third step of the game such that $\mathbf{cm} = [1]_1 f(x)$. As \mathcal{A} is algebraic, when sending the commitments $\mathbf{m}, \mathbf{a}, \mathbf{b}_0, \mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}_a, \mathbf{q}_b, \pi_\gamma, \mathbf{a}_0$ during protocol execution it also sends polynomials $m(X), A(X), B_0(X), P(X), Q_A(X), Q_B(X), h(X), A_0(X) \in \mathbb{F}_{<N}[X]$ such that the former are their corresponding commitments. Let E be the event that \mathbf{V} outputs *accept*. Note that the event that \mathcal{A} wins the knowledge soundness game is contained in E . E implies all pairing checks have passed. Let $A \subset E$ be the event that one of the corresponding ideal pairing checks as defined in Section 3.3 didn't pass. According to Lemma 3.2, $\text{prob}(A) = \text{negl}(\lambda)$.

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