A Primer for the Doug Butler
Enterprises 21st Century approach to Farrier Education!

Essential Principles
of Horseshoeing

A first-of-its kind resource providing step-by-step instruction and corresponding video training to help the beginner, do-it-yourselfer & expert farrier work with confidence and easily master the principles of soundness, lameness prevention and humane horse foot care.

Doug Butler Enterprises, Inc.
495 Table Road, Crawford, NE 69339
Thank you for taking an interest in our latest book **Essential Principles of Horseshoeing**.

Filled with practical instructions, interactive training materials and step-by-step illustrations of common horseshoeing and trimming techniques, *Essential Principles of Horseshoeing* is the keystone text for farrier education or home use. It presents a new, yet foundational way of teaching this ancient craft. Traditional techniques of the farrier craft have changed little in 2000 years, yet their application has changed dramatically in the last 25 years. This colorful book teaches simple techniques to accelerate learning and mastery.

Butler’s *The Principles of Horseshoeing* sets the standard for farrier education. It has been the trusted voice for the past 38 years. This *Essential book* evolved from lessons Doug learned while teaching the craft to thousands of students, including his sons. His teaching materials provide a solid foundation of farrier education in the 21st century, as well as sound principles of horseshoeing for the betterment of horses everywhere.

In the pages that follow we will show you examples pulled from the actual pages of the book that showcase how the book:

- Provides simple explanations for complex farrier procedures
- Brings the classroom directly to you to learn at your own pace
- Dissects the most critical information from P3, the encyclopedia of farrier science and craftsmanship

**For over 4 decades, horse owners across the globe have turned to Doug Butler Enterprises for sensible solutions for equine soundness.**

Now for the first time in farrier education, the Butler team has uniquely combined their world-renowned teachings with cutting-edge technology to bring the principles and techniques of great horse foot care to life.
Whether you are a beginner, do-it-yourselfer or expert farrier seeking to perfect your craft….

…this book equips individuals of all backgrounds with the best techniques to accurately trim and shoe horses. **No more flipping through long, dry text books with too many words and not enough demonstration on how to get the job done!** Instead, *Essential Principles of Horseshoeing* is a highly visual, easy-to-understand, and **interactive** companion, utilizing colorful guides and even QR codes to send readers directly to relevant video demonstrations on live horses of common solutions and horseshoeing techniques.

Use this comprehensive resource to increase your confidence, enjoy working with horses and further your understanding of equine foot care, while also discovering how to:

- **See and create balance** when trimming a horse’s foot.
- Keep you and your horse **safe** when doing farrier work.
- Understand the structure and function of the horse’s foot.
- Use farrier and forging tools to **accurately shoe a horse.**
- Recognize **common problems** with horse foot conformation.
- Work safely and competently to **alter shoes hot or cold.**
- Select and apply pads when necessary to protect the foot.
- Effectively communicate with farriers, veterinarians, and other horsemen, so you can **feel confident knowing your horse is always receiving the best care.**
- Develop your inner eye for detail to evaluate farrier work….to help you **quickly spot the good farriers from the bad.**
- Succeed with people and **create a healthy life/work balance** as a professional farrier.
- **Make a hard job easier** by increasing your knowledge and efficiency in the area of proper hoof care.
- Get a great start transforming your passion of working with horses into a **lucrative business.**

Don’t wait to increase your skill and give your horse the care it deserves.

After taking a look at the following pages we are sure you will find this is a must have addition to your library. Order your copy of *Essential Principles of Horseshoeing* today!

CHAPTER 1

Qualifications for Future Farriers

If you want to be a farrier, you must possess average intelligence, be able to communicate by reading, writing, and speaking, and be able to do basic math. You should possess above-average mechanical ability and have a strong body.

The following are the abilities and desires that a farrier must possess:

1. Ability and Desire to Be Successful
You must have a desire to learn and succeed: that is your greatest qualification. Transferring knowledge from head to hands takes time. To some degree, ability is inherent (natural). Desire is the motivator. Your success as a farrier comes from your desire, your natural ability and your continuing experience.

Your desire to succeed means that you will do what it takes in disciplined study and focused practice to achieve the level of performance you set as a goal for yourself. You must be committed, determined, and patient: skills take time to develop. Youth is on your side: you have time to become a highly skilled farrier. However, your level of desire to succeed tops the list of importance.

2. Ability and Desire to Work Physically Hard
A farrier must have a strong and healthy body. You must be committed to good health habits and be capable of sustained, hard work. Few jobs are physically harder than horseshoeing. And, horseshoeing is piecework: no work, no pay.

The desire to be successful is the most important qualification for farrier students.
7. Ability and Desire to Manage Self

A farrier must be able to self-manage. You must overcome any tendency to embrace bad health habits that make a poor impression and kill your business. You must set goals and use spare time to improve yourself by diligent study and patient practice. You must make the most of every opportunity to learn and improve yourself.

A farrier must possess some degree of “common sense.” You must respect the time of others. You must keep your word and develop a reputation of integrity: make your word, your bond.

Gender Is Not a Qualification

Many women aspire to be farriers. Frequently, women are the most conscientious and motivated students in a class. They often exhibit more concern for a horse’s welfare than men. They apply themselves to study. They work hard to raise their skill level. Over the years, we have taught a number of outstanding women students.

As a woman who wants to undertake horseshoeing as a career, you should be realistic about the physical stress of horseshoeing. Are you physically strong enough to consistently, day-after-day, over the span of a career do this work? Be aware that even though your knowledge and craftsmanship might be superior to a man’s, your earning ability as a professional could well be limited by the physical requirements of this job. (This also applies to men who are not physically—or emotionally—capable of prolonged, hard work.)

Men and women who can handle the physical and mental demands of horseshoeing should not be discouraged. Those who cannot should recognize their limitations and realize what they are up against. Gender is not a qualification. Determination, strength, and endurance are.

Make the Most of Opportunities

Many apprentices and horseshoeing school students fail to take advantage of learning opportunities. This is a great tragedy that affects future earning ability and chance for success. Self-discipline is a characteristic of maturity. Emotionally immature people are not capable of making the most of learning opportunities.
Horseshoeing Requires a Unique Skill Combination

Horseshoeing requires a skill set unlike any other occupation. Physical, mental, emotional and spiritual skills are needed. We have identified seven areas in which professional farriers must be competent in order to be successful. A successful professional farrier must have foot skill, anatomy skill, horsemanship skill, people skill, forging skill, business skill, and health skill.

You should constantly seek improvement and growth in each of these areas. Farrier skills involve a transfer of knowledge from your head to your hands; you learn them slowly and sequentially. Continuing education is a necessity to differentiate you as a competent professional in the farrier's craft.

Foot Skill: Farriers must know how to use the tools to trim and shoe the foot.

Anatomy Skill: Farriers must know the internal structures and functions of the foot.

Respect the Horse: Farriers must possess horsemanship skills.

Respect the Client: Farriers must possess people skills.
Horseshoeing Is Now Mostly Taught in Horseshoeing Trade Schools

For centuries, the only way to learn horseshoeing was to serve an apprenticeship, often four or more years. A several-year apprenticeship to an expert teacher and craftsman remains desirable today, since horseshoeing is a craft best learned one-on-one. However, in our modern society this has become more difficult because:

1. It is difficult to find the winning combination of great farrier and teacher who is willing to work with students. Good craftsmen are not always good teachers.

2. Student expectations have shifted. Few want to spend the necessary time to learn a skill from the ground up at an early age. Most want to start work and begin earning income immediately.

3. Complementary knowledge and skills are needed to succeed in today’s complicated society. The necessary education and experience should come from more than one source.

Trade schools offer the best way to begin your farrier education today. There are tremendous differences in these schools. Length is not as important as content and application. Some are public and some are private. Consider a trade school as an introduction and a beginning to learning the horseshoeing trade.

You must take responsibility for your education and recognize that most of your learning happens after you leave school. Remember: this trade takes a lifetime to master.

Horseshoeing Has a Poor Public Image

Horseshoeing has a poor reputation created by years of bad examples. Unfortunately, it has influenced the perception of horseshoeing and attracted some that do not desire to work to a high standard. Their standard of performance is only as high as the expectation of their instructors. And, once they leave their instructors’ supervision, they tend to relax their standards. This type spoil it for professional farriers who take their horse-care roles seriously.
After completing work on one hind foot, ask the holder to change sides and move the foal’s hindquarters against the other wall of the corner and keep his head stationary in the corner. Trim that hind foot.

Now “swap ends” and place the foal’s hindquarters in the corner and crowd it against one wall. The holder should stand to the outside against the foal to prevent it from coming out or going forward. The natural reaction of a foal to having its front feet lifted is to go back or up. Pick up the front foot and lean against the foal. Place the foot between your legs and begin trimming. Work rapidly, and allow the foal to relax and stand up straight as soon as it will.
Foot Handling for Trimming and Shoeing

A farrier must learn how to handle a horse’s feet. Foot handling is the “hard work” of shoeing horses. Learning how to handle the feet and assume the shoeing position safely and comfortably saves time, work, and energy. The result is greater profit and more satisfaction from your work. Foot-handling skill should be thoroughly studied and practiced on a gentle horse until it becomes part of you. A farrier’s degree of mastery of this skill determines to a great degree his or her success in the profession.

All farriers should learn the techniques discussed here. They are safe and effective. As you gain experience, other methods that save time could become apparent. Adopt those that help you become more efficient.

Experience in handling horses in general and picking up and holding their feet in position for shoeing is necessary before learning to trim or shoe them. Gentle, well-trained horses should be sought for this practice.
runs through the center of a small muscle mass from its origin on the back of the femur and inserts on the point of the hock.

The common (digital) extensor tendon of the front leg below the knee and the long (digital) extensor of the hind leg below the hock essentially serve the same purpose. The main extensor passes down over the front and slightly to the outside of the leg and attaches to the front of the long pastern, the short pastern, and the extensor process of the coffin bone. The main extensor tendon is joined on each side of the pastern by branches of the suspensory ligament. The common or long extensor extends the leg.

The lateral extensor tendon assists the common extensor in extending the front leg and the long extensor in extending the hind leg. The lateral extensor of the front leg normally runs separately but parallel to the common extensor. It inserts on the proximal lateral surface of the long pastern bone just below the fetlock joint. The lateral extensor tendon of the hind leg has a variable insertion but usually joins the long extensor tendon just below the hock.

A bursa—a small, sac-like, lubricating cushion containing synovial fluid—is located between the two opposing surfaces of a bone prominence and a tendon. The navicular bursa is located between the deep (digital) flexor tendon (DDFT) and the navicular bone. Tendon sheaths containing synovial fluid lubricate the movement of the tendons on the back of the leg.

1. Synovial capsule of fetlock j.
2. Subtendinous bursa of fetlock j.
3. Synovial capsule of pastern j.
4. Synovial capsule of coffin j.
5. Collar of DDFT
6. Subcutaneous bursa of ergot
7. Tendon sheath of DDFT
8. Navicular bursa
Horse Foot Conformation Causes and Correction

Foot and limb conformations are some of the most highly heritable traits. Some estimates put heritability as high as .65. This means that 65% of conformation is due to heredity or genetics and 35% is due to environment or management. Conformation is a result of nature and nurture.

Very little, if any, change can be made in limb-bone conformation by so-called corrective shoeing. However, farriers must learn to see the source of or predisposition to problems that ultimately affect the feet. Limb conformation affects the growth, wear, and movement of the feet. Conversely, the condition of the feet affects the development and soundness of the limbs.

Foot conformation is the result of both genetic and environmental effects.

Genetically caused hoof and limb defects can be passed from one or both parents to the foal. In either case, they are highly heritable and are usually passed on to the next generation. Defects in foot conformation might predispose a horse to unsoundness and lameness.

Environmentally caused hoof and limb defects have several causes. The environment of the uterus (congenital) may be responsible for creating some limb defects before a foal is born. Or, the environment after birth (developmental) may create problems. Nutrition, exercise, and hoof management all are important to ideal hoof formation.

You must become a critical observer before you can expect to make accurate decisions about foot care. Limb deviations are best viewed and analyzed from the ground up. You must learn to judge how far you should go when sculpturing a deformed hoof back to an ideal form. You must learn to “see” the distal phalanx bone within the hoof. A horseshoer changes the conformation of the foot to some extent every time he or she trims or shoes the horse. You must learn to make that a positive change.

Corrections must be applied with sound judgment. Every horse must be treated as an individual. The hoof is not a static organ. It is constantly changing due to differences in growth, weight bearing, age, diet, moisture content, and injuries. When in doubt, balance the foot and let the horse take care of itself.

Horses have preferences for using their right or left limbs: the hoof that is used the most is the larger of a pair. For example, many sound horse’s right front foot is slightly larger than the left. Chronically lame horses have a smaller hoof on the lame leg.
Safety First

Choose a safe place to work that is free from potentially dangerous situations. The ideal place is usually an area far away from the center of activity at the stable where there might be dogs or little children. But choose one familiar to the horse. It should be a place where the horse cannot hurt itself or damage any property if it misbehaves. Ideally, the place should be level, dry, and shaded; have good lighting; be easily accessible from your horseshoeing outfit; and have room enough so that you can work comfortably and safely. Because the horse is a herd animal, it will usually stand better if another horse is nearby, especially its favorite companion.

Whenever possible, shoe a horse while it is being held by the owner or by someone familiar with it. Many horses won’t stand well when they are tied up, especially when they are away from familiar surroundings. Instruct the holder to stand on the same side of the horse as the farrier is working. The holder is then in a position to pull the hind feet of the horse away from the farrier in case of trouble.

When it is not possible to work with a capable holder, the horse must be tied. If the horse must be tied, tie it to a safe and immovable object properly and securely with a halter and rope that won’t break. A solid wall or fence should be behind where the horse is tied to prevent accidental injury if the horse pulls back or lunges forward. For horses that pull back (pullers), attaching them to an inner tube that stretches stops them. An inner tube is especially useful for younger horses.

A strong halter and tie rope should be a part of every horseshoer’s equipment. Nylon halters and ropes are preferable to leather because of their durability and strength. Tie a knot that holds but that can be released easily. Knots that are pulled tight by a struggling horse can be loosened with a pair of pliers. Confirmed pullers must be tied with a strong rope that passes through the halter, and they must be tied around the girth.

Cross tying is wise where practical. It is most commonly done in the alleyway of a barn. Cross tying is done by snapping two ropes to the halter, one on each side, and tying them about eight to twelve feet apart. This method of tying allows you more room to work in front of the horse and prevents most horses from pulling back. Some horsemen use a light chain on each side tied with a string tie that will break if the horse rears or turns around.
Balance is a basic fundamental skill of the farrier’s craft. There are three dimensions or views to balance.

Apply by trimming the foot to align around the foot’s center of gravity and by fitting a shoe to align with or support the limb’s center of gravity. Because the horse is an athletic animal, do this with common sense and within the confines of the foot.

The shoe can normally be fit no wider than the perimeter of the dressed hoof wall from quarter to quarter and no wider than a perpendicular line from the coronary band to the ground from the quarters to the heel. We make exceptions for horses with deformed limbs. The base must be wider than the center of gravity (ref. Chapter 7, p. 203). Because the shoe base is wider than the hoof and sticks out beyond it, the horse might tread on it and pull it off. Apply a hoof composite to prevent this.

**FOOT BALANCE ASSESSMENT**

To assess foot balance, view the foot in relation to the horse’s conformation and the ground. Foot balance can be easily described by considering the three-dimensional spatial relationships of the foot and how each of these relates to the center of gravity.

Each limb has a center of gravity. To determine its position, drop a plumb line from the point of attachment of the limbs to the body trunk. The hind limb attaches to the
Hold the nail so that the trademark, on the beveled head of the nail, is facing the center of the foot.

Position of your hand when driving nails; move your finger before the nail exits the hoof.

Grasp the toe of the foot so that you can safely and securely hold the hoof while driving and wringing off the nail.

Wringing the nail off is done by quickly rotating the hammerhead one-half turn.

The nail should be angled at the pitch of the hoof wall.
The Stubby (Hot)

To make the broad, round toe of the Stubby shoe, strike down in one place while rotating the shoe back and forth with the tongs. As the shoe begins to open up, continue sliding the shoe back toward the wider radius of the horn, depending on how wide of a toe you want.

To turn the branch of the Stubby shoe, hold the shoe on the horn at a slight angle and rotate the tongs under the horn while hitting in the same place to make the shoe take the shape of the wider radius of the horn.

Continue moving the shoe on the horn until you get to the heel; repeat the process on the other branch. Level the shoe.
The Stubby (Cold)

1. To cold shape the Stubby shoe, hold the shoe against the anvil with the contact points of the shoe closer to the toe (and a space between the anvil and shoe at the toe). Strike down in the same place with the hammer while rotating the shoe back and forth with your gripping hand. As the shoe changes shape at the toe, it will be necessary to slide the shoe down the horn, depending on how broad of a toe you want.

(Right) Continue turning the branch on the cams, making the fulcrum point between each of the nail holes.

2. Turn the branch of the shoe on the cams, with the fulcrum point between the first and second nail holes first.

3. Turn the heel in last and repeat the process on the other branch. Level the shoe.
Types of Pads

Pads are placed between the shoe and hoof for several reasons. They are made from a variety of materials and come in numerous designs. Most common are those made of leather, plastic, or rubber. One of the first things that beginning farriers can do when they are helping an experienced farrier is to prepare pads for application. Pads are either full or rim in configuration.

**Full pads** cover the entire sole and increase the hoof length. Antiseptic hoof packing must be placed under the pad to prevent the growth of anaerobic bacteria. Sole pressure must be avoided under these pads. To achieve this, leave the hoof long and trim the sole or apply a rim pad between the short hoof and a full pad.

**Rim pads** go between the shoe and hoof. Use them to increase hoof length, increase traction by increasing hoof concavity, and absorb some shock. Their advantage: they do not cover the bottom of the foot and cause it to get soft; they do not provide an anaerobic environment.

Horses can easily become pad dependent when using full pads, just as we humans become shoe dependent. It takes awhile for the sole of a horse that has been wearing pads to harden up after they are removed.

Fit pads in a stack to the angle of the hoof and punch the shoe coarse to allow for the increased thickness. Drilling pilot holes through the shoe nail holes into the pad with a one-eighth-inch (1/8") drill makes nailing easier.

**Wedge pads** are also called degree pads. Use wedges to elevate the heel, the toe, or one side of the foot. Elevating the heel helps to relieve tension on the deep flexor tendon. Elevating the heel of a horse that has underrun or collapsed heels might not be helpful when the hoof wall tubules are bent or collapsed. Cut the heel of the hoof to sound, unbent tubule wall before you use a wedge. Before a wedge can be helpful, identify and fix the cause of the problem.

Pads cause a loss of traction. This is desirable when you are shoeing the hind feet of reining horses. However, when you are shoeing jumping and road horses that must have traction on slick surfaces, help is needed. Borium or screw-in studs are also used in conjunction with pads. Use snow pads during winter to prevent snowballing under the foot.
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Since 1974, Butler has been a name synonymous with quality horse foot care. Doug Butler is a life-long learner that has continually sought excellence by producing how-to books and videos to help horsemen take better care of their horses. Each edition of The Principles of Horseshoeing has increased in size and become the standard in the industry.

As Doug and his sons taught thousands of students from all over the world, they learned that there are certain essentials one must master to become a competent farrier. They wanted beginners to recognize what experienced craftsmen see so easily. They put themselves in the place of the learner, as though they were seeing these principles for the first time.

This book is for people who don’t want to know as much detail as a professional does, yet want to understand the essentials of horse foot care. With step-by-step instructions, diagrams and interactive technology such as QR codes that bring readers back to videos demonstrating techniques on real horses, learning about hoof care has never been easier.

If you want the critical knowledge needed to best serve horses, Essential Principles of Horseshoeing will teach you how to:

- Use farrier and forging tools to **accurately trim and shoe a horse**.
- Keep you and your horse **safe** when doing farrier work.
- Understand the structure and function of the horse's foot.
- **See and create balance** when trimming a horse’s foot.
- Recognize **common problems** with horse foot conformation.
- Work safely and competently to **alter shoes hot or cold**.
- Select and apply pads when necessary to protect the foot.
- Effectively communicate with farriers, veterinarians, and other horsemen, so you can feel **confident knowing your horse is always receiving the best care**.
- Develop your inner eye for detail to evaluate farrier work...to help you **quickly recognize the good farriers from the bad**.
- Succeed with people and **create a healthy life/work balance** as a professional farrier.
- **Make a hard job easier** by increasing your knowledge and efficiency in the area of proper hoof care.
- Get a great start transforming your passion of working with horses into a **lucrative business**.
Doug Butler has practiced the farrier's craft for 55 years and is often referred to as "The Founder of Modern Farrier Education." He taught Farrier Science and Craftsmanship, as well as Equine Science classes, for more than 30 years at various universities, including Colorado State University. He has a PhD from Cornell University, is a Certified Journeyman Farrier of the American Farriers Association (CJF) and was the first American Fellow of the Worshipful Company of Farriers (FWCF) of England. Dr. Butler is a "Hall of Fame" member, a "Farrier Industry Legend" and an "Outstanding Educator" who has taught many of today's most successful farriers, veterinarians, and horsemen working in all fifty states and a dozen countries. He has won farrier competitions in America and England. His special interest is in therapeutic shoeing.

Jake Butler was raised in the farrier business and has been shoeing professionally for 18 years. He is an AFA Certified Journeyman Farrier, taught Farrier Science and Craftsmanship for 4 years at New Mexico's Mescalands Community College, served for a decade at AFA's Anatomy Lab, and won farrier competitions. He is the CEO of Butler Professional Farrier School, LLC near Chadron, Nebraska. His special interest is the anatomy of the foot.

Pete Butler has been shoeing for 12 years. He apprenticed with his dad and then attended farrier school. He has a BA in English, has trained horses for a living, and won farrier contests. He is an AFA Certified Journeyman Farrier and teaches at the Butler Professional Farrier School. His special interest is blacksmithing.
The best way to learn a craft is one-on-one instruction from an experienced master. In addition to being a long and often inefficient way to learn, there are few opportunities to learn this way today. Schools of several weeks or months duration followed by on the job training as an apprentice or helper have become the accepted way to begin the work of a farrier in America.

It pays to go by the book. For nearly four decades horsemen have relied on Butler’s *The Principles of Horseshoeing* as the standard for sound horse foot care. It has been used by more farrier training schools than any other text. Now there is a new comprehensive book containing the essential proven principles you need to understand in order to succeed. Its detail and clarity are unequaled. It makes learning a hard job easier.

The new Essential *Principles of Horseshoeing* is a condensed and colorful book loaded with clear step-by-step instructions making it easily the best book available on ideal horse foot care. It’s loaded with the most authoritative information on horse care and features easy to follow sequences showing you how to accurately trim and shoe horses.

The concepts presented are easily understandable. Before you commit to enroll in any instructional program, it makes good sense to prepare for entry. To be the best you can be you must be prepared physically, mentally and emotionally for the school experience. Even if you just want to take better care of your horses, this is the book for you.

Get the most out of your time at school and your tuition dollars by preparing before you go away to school. You are then prepared to take advantage of opportunities given to you and the more you will learn. If you are a horse owner, this book is the price of one visit from the farrier.

If you are looking for a way to create a lucrative business with an income comparable to other professionals while being immersed in your passion, being a self-employed farrier may be for you. Obtaining this Essential book and applying the principles taught at your pace at your place will help you determine if this is a career for you.
It pays to go buy the book!

Horseshoeing has been and continues to be a misunderstood occupation. As with any business, the person who is the most knowledgeable and knows how to apply that knowledge will be the most successful at getting and keeping business.

People not familiar with the horse industry, when referring to the work of a farrier, will often say, “Do they still do that?” They are unaware that the horse industry is a big business in America with a $40 billion direct economic effect. Studies have shown that care of its feet is about 10 percent of the cost of keeping a horse.

Unfortunately, some farriers are practicing at an extremely low level of proficiency. This is partly because of poor preparation for their farrier school training, and partly because of the low level of horse knowledge of the horse owning public who tolerate those who are not willing to excel at their chosen career.

Fortunately, this provides an opportunity for you to be a change agent by preparing and committing to excel at school and in your future business.

You will also find suggestions to help you with exercises in *Six-Figure Shoeing* and *Shoeing in Your Right Mind*. These books are designed to guide your preparations and present principles that will help you succeed.

**The new Essential Principles of Horseshoeing** is our newest resource that allows you to learn at your own pace at your own place. When you are ready for the hands on experience of school, you will make the best use of your time and get the most out of it. An additional benefit will be evident if and when you decide to take the voluntary AFA Farrier Certification Exams. The most commonly held complaint from examiners is the lack of preparation by candidates for the exam.

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**It pays to go buy book – get your copy today by visiting:**