



BRITISH
WEIGHT
LIFTING

COACHING HANDBOOK

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WHY THIS BOOK?

Coaching weightlifting is **not** just about shouting

Finish your pull!

from the far end of gym.

This book contains theories and prompts that will help you think about coaching from different perspectives. More importantly it will serve as a method of journaling and capturing your thoughts as you develop your own approach to coaching athletes towards their goals.

There is no right way to use this book other than making your mark in it, and we would consider it a success if you were able to look back at it in 5 years' time and re-find some of the wisdom you earned from your experience and then be able to pass that wisdom on to other coaches that you interact with.

We also hope you engage with us and let us know if there are additional features or theory's that should be added into the next edition of this book.

IDEAS FOR THINKING



The following ideas and theories are lenses for viewing the world.

It's up to you to decide when they offer a useful perspective to look through, they might highlight what's useful in your thinking and approach at times and they may highlight blind spots for you to address.

The act of speaking to others and writing down thoughts forces us to think clearly.

It's important that you both consider the benefits of these ideas to your coaching but also the contraindications to your coaching.



THE FOG: FACT OPINION GOSSIP

Human communication and thinking is not perfect, the ability to understand the world is a skill that can be developed, and the ability to communicate what you understand is another skill that can be developed.

When receiving or passing information its useful to categorise what you know or what you are hearing as the following:



FACT:

Something that is supported by strong evidence and is devoid of personal judgement.

Not a fact:

“I think Sally’s clean, and jerk is good.” This contains judgement

Fact:

“Sally cleans 80% of her attempts at 68kg. The 20% of failed lifts are in front of her.” There is no judgement in the second statement its pure fact-based on data that is observable and verifiable

OPINION:

A professional opinion by a person with training and skill in the area that they are talking about, with their view put forward in a facilitative supportive and empowering way.

Personal opinion containing judgement:

“Sally doesn’t work hard enough in the gym or in the kitchen to make the gains she wants.”

Professional Opinion:

“Sally can change how she fuels her body to help her have energy for the gym and increase recovery.”

GOSSIP:

Gossip is often second hand information. It is not able to be trusted and can be dramatized, salacious and distracting from what is in the coach or athletes’ control.

A decent standard to uphold which prevents gossip from becoming an issue is: Never say anything about anyone that you wouldn’t say to them directly, and secondly when presented with this information from someone ask “does this person know that you are talking about them?” This will influence the person to consider their reasons for sharing.

This standard build’s trust.

However, at times understanding gossip could give your insight that you might not have as a coach.

I heard from “Jo that Sally has broken up with her boyfriend.” Such information might be useful for understanding biopsychosocial features of the athlete.

THE BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL MODEL

The Biopsychosocial model explains a view of working with people's experiences.

Often, we become reductionist in thinking about supporting athletes. We can think only in terms of technique, or muscle physiology or behaviour.

Many things shape and interact to create an athlete's experience.

Biology: The physical make-up of the human from atomic particles right up to what fuel they have available for training and performance.

Psychology: The thoughts, emotions, behaviours, perceptions and underlying beliefs they have.

Sociology: What world are they connected into who is in their top ten interactions and how do these frequent interactions impact the athletes progress towards their goals.

These three features of human experience can influence each other. And this model is used to give a broader perspective of a human's experience.



SETTING GOALS

Goals setting is often done badly. It is a system of prioritising efforts, resources, and collaborators to achieve a performance over time.

Outcome goals:

These are the overarching result that a person wants. For example: Win a medal at nationals; qualify for worlds.

Performance goals:

These are clearly defined performance measurements that will contribute to the likelihood of the outcome goal. For example:

- Snatch 120 x 3 and clean and jerk 150 x 3 in a single training session.
- Squat 120% of the predicted medal zone for Clean and Jerk 12 weeks before competition.
- Reduce body weight by 3 kg.

Process goals:

These are goals you do that you have full control over and should contribute to the achievement of the Performance and outcome goals. For example:

- Train 4 times a week.
- Eat 2000 calories with appropriate % of protein carbs fat in each meal.
- Do a proper warm up.

Goal setting is often done wrong because it only takes into account one area of an athlete's life. Effective goal setting is about prioritisation of all available resources towards all important goals. For example: Work/Study Family, social, life and sporting goals. Not just sporting goals.

GOAL SETTING TASK:

Tell an athlete to take 5 min and write down all the things that are important to them that they want to achieve in their life. Use the full 5 min.

Then spend 5 minutes doing this for the next 5 years (or 3 years if quite young)

Then the next year.

Then the next 6 months.

They should then have spent 20 minutes in total thinking about each time frame and have a list of important tasks for each time frame.

From here pick two tasks from each time frame and label them A goals and a further two as B goals.

You have now helped the athlete prioritise important things across the full timeframe of their life.

Next take a clean page and help them write out weekly actions or process goals that contribute towards the achievement.

Key point: what's important to the athlete is what will be prioritised. If you try to influence them to over focus on areas that they don't think are important, they will likely rebel as opposed to see this task as beneficial.

COMPETITION REVIEW PROCESS

If, as a coach, you don't have some difference of opinion in a performance review, you are not serving the athlete as they know as much as you. It's vital to let them speak first and share their thoughts on their performance. That way if they do something you agree with they will be invested in it as it is their idea because they voiced first. Then after they speak you can offer deeper thoughts.

- What was the aim or purpose of the competition? (For example: target or experience, or trial of approach etc)
- Was the target achieved or not?
- What contributed to or detracted towards the target being achieved in the months prior?
- What contributed to or detracted towards the target being achieved in the weeks prior?
- What contributed to or detracted to the target being achieved in the days prior?
- What contributed to or detracted to the target being achieved in the hours prior to performance?
- How was the weight management structured?
- What are the successes from the athlete's perspective?
- What are the successes from the coach's perspective?
- What are the areas for future improvement from the athlete's perspective?
- What are the areas for future improvement from the coach's perspective?



Key point: performance is synergistic and not simplistic. Identify multiple points of success and multiple points of failure to improve at the fastest rate.

SURVIVORSHIP BIAS

Survivorship bias is when we look at what survives and bias our understanding of performance on what has passed a certain threshold.

The simplest example is of an airplane; when the planes returned from battle, they found all the planes had holes in the same areas. It was then assumed that the planes needed more armour in those areas.

However, if we look at the plane, we see that the areas that are hit are non-critical. Those planes that were hit in the critical areas didn't make it back.

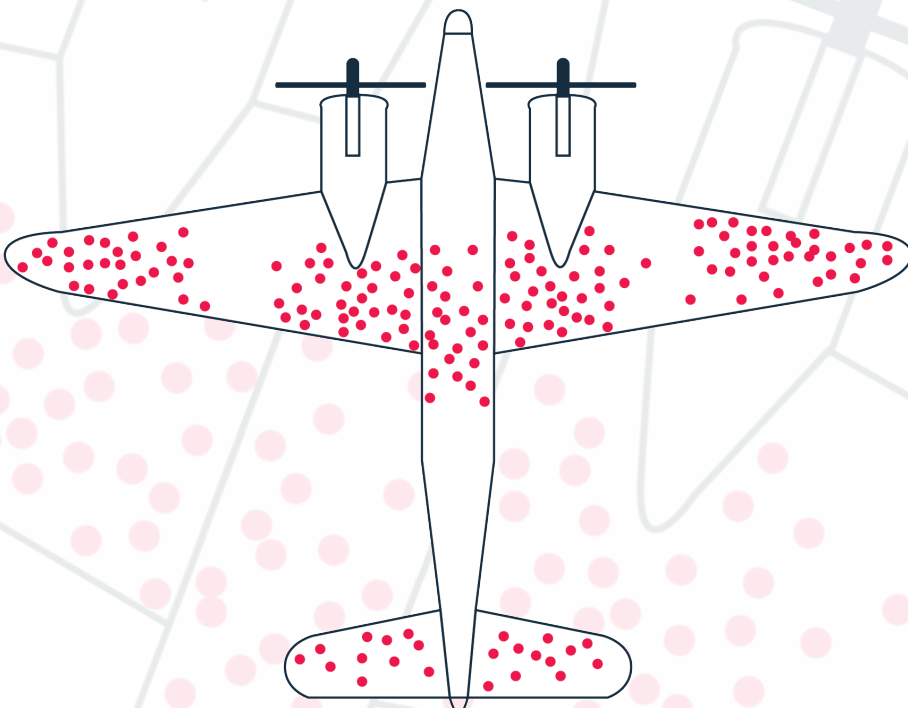
This relates to weightlifting in that we often look at an athlete and say they are very accomplished, and they need to start doing _____. Because they are missing _____ quality from their performance.

However, just like adding unneeded armour to a plane this can affect how the athlete recovers or distract them from what is making them successful in their development.

It is better to look at their performance and development and ask the following questions:

“What are they doing that is keeping this performance and level of development going?”

“What are the strengths of how this athlete operates that need protected?”



DECREASING NERVES IN COMPETITION

There are 3 things which reduce an athlete's nervousness in competition.

1. Reduce (simplify) the task demands
2. Reduce the importance of the event
3. Increase (re-focus on) on the athletes' resources.

Simplify the task demands

At a competition, there is a lot for the athlete to think about. They must warm up, get to the waiting room, go out and lift, execute a technical lift, look at the right spot, set up correctly, wait for the down signal. It can all be overwhelming. As a coach, pick one thing that is certain that the athlete can do.

For example:

“Sit in the corner and breathe deeply for 10 breaths”. “Do a warmup to 60kg”.

“Just go out and get into position to do the lift the rest will happen”

What you say is one specific action or statement. It is certain and time limited to reduce the task demands.

Reduce the importance of the event

No lift is ever more important than an athlete. Lifting only exists because athletes choose to lift. Increase the importance of them as a human and diminish the importance of competing and outcomes if they are becoming stressed about it.

Increase the athlete's resources

Refocusing on the athletes' strengths and evidence their ability to perform.

For example:

"You have lifted this 3 times in the gym already"

"You have squatted more than enough to be able to lift this."

"Last time you were in this position you did _____and it worked for you."

Do not use lies or positivity use cold hard facts that they can then rethink about what they are doing.



REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Coaching humans is complex. There are not a one size fits all model to enhancing human performance. In complex domains, reflective practice is a key approach to developing performance. Reflective practice is simply answering questions to which there is no right answer forcing you to think around an experience so that you can improve or learn what to do in future settings with similar features. There are various ways to do reflective practice but either written or talked through with another person is best as it forces you to think coherently as opposed to just doing the thinking in your head.

Use the questions below to start some reflective practice of your own:

Athlete engagement:

How engaged are participants before, during, and after the activity?
Did it support them towards their goals?
How much time do they spend 'doing' during a session? Listening?
Responding to questions?

Practice structure:

What activities were planned and why?
How was the activity structured to help the participant progress towards objectives?
Do the activities relate to one another and the objective? If so, how?

Coach behaviours:

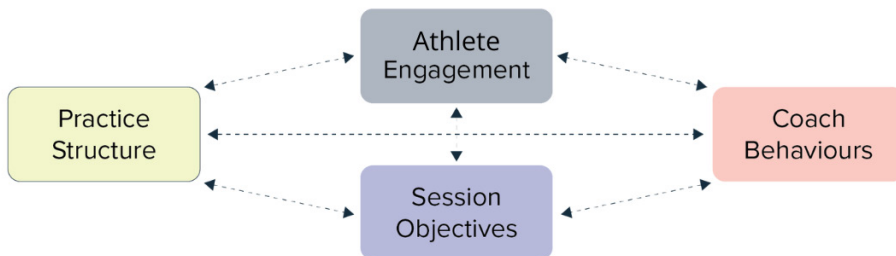
How did you coach before, during and after the session to support their progress?
Did you set or solve problems?
Did your approach promote learning/improvement?
What were the participants/you doing during interactions?

Session objectives:

What were the session objectives? Where did they come from?
What are you trying to achieve? (Short, medium, long-term)?
Do they build on previous sessions or lead where you intend to go?

My reflections on athlete engagement...

My reflections on practice structure...



My reflections on coach behaviours...

My reflections on session objectives...

SUPPORTING BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

Long-term behaviour change is best done by intrinsic motivation which comes from within.

External motivation can work but requires a constant external force which is often costly in time and resources.

A person's behaviour can be supported by understanding the COM-B model

Questions to explore this are:

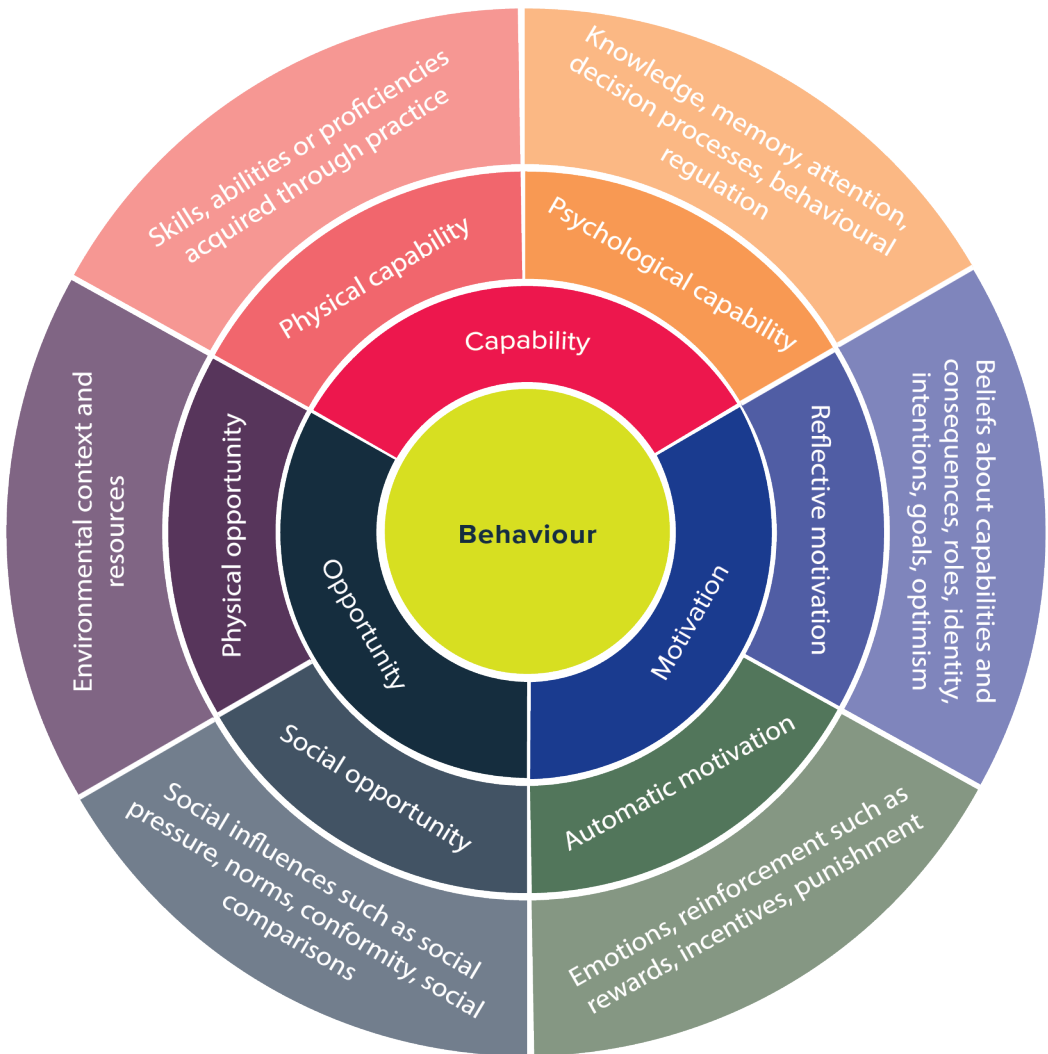
“What is your capability to do this behaviour? And what can we do to increase your skills and capabilities?”

“What Opportunities do you have to do this behaviour and how can we increase these opportunities?”

“What is it that motivates you about this behaviour that keeps you wanting to put in the effort?”



Diagram overlaid adapted from Michie, S., Van Stralen, M. M., & West, R. (2011). The behaviour change wheel: a new method for characterising and designing behaviour change interventions. *Implementation science*, 6(1), 1-12.



BUILDING CONFIDENCE ON A FOUNDATION OF BRAVERY

Confidence is a person's belief in their ability to be effective at a task.

Confidence is increased by:

- Previous experiences of success
“When have you done this or something like this before?”
- Verbal persuasion from self or others
“What do you need to say to yourself to help you?”
- Emotional and physical state
“What emotion do you want to be feeling and what state do you want your body to be in?”
- Modelling others who have done the same.
“Who like you can you copy or learn from in this scenario?”

Bravery is deciding that its worth trying even if we fail and even if we are scared.

Bravery is increased by:

- Defining clearly and specifically what we fear.
- Planning how we prevent or minimise the chance of failure.
- Deciding how we can fix it if we fail.

Use the table overleaf to fill out a fear you have or an athlete has to learn the process.

REPAIR					
PREVENT					
DEFINE					

SEE IT, DO IT, SHARE IT: CLARIFY FOR PERFORMANCE ENHANCEMENT.

See it - “What does this look like?”

In different contexts words mean different things for example in one environment commitment might mean “turning up on time” and another it means doing an “effective warm up”. It’s common for an athlete and a coach to use the same term but never have an objectively defined meaning of the term or have identified the behaviour(s) associated with that term.

For example: what does commitment look like?

Vague & non-objective:	Observable & objective:
Committed to giving your all.	Arrive 5 minutes before training.

Do it - “Can you do it?”

This stage ensures the behaviour is framed as achievable and not a deficit avoidance. Often, we define what we don’t want and then athletes can only get feedback when they fall short as opposed to when they succeed in meeting a standard.

Checking if they can do it also ensures it’s something they have control over:

Defecit based:	Achievable:
Don’t be late to training.	Arrive 5 minutes before training.
Don’t eat chocolate.	Eat 5 fruit & veg a day.

Share it - “Can you publicly acknowledge this person’s success so others can learn as well?”

When creating a club or squad environment its helpful for people to learn from others successes.

When you have conversations about defining fluffy terms if you make them less personally specific you then create an opportunity for others to learn from them, therefore promoting and spreading this behaviour.

Fluffy term: Weight Management for Competition.

Personal description
“12 week cut,
without water loading
and taking creatine.”

This may not be a relevant
approach for all as its
too personalised.

“Using a weight management
approach that has been
tested and trailed either
in training or in a less
important comp”

This definition can be shared
with others so that they may
copy or learn.

The key feature of the See It Do It Share It approach is that it’s a conversation where the coach and athletes find out how their opinions differ, and they seek to create a shared understanding and alignment.



QUESTION PROMPTS FOR ATHLETES

Please add in your own prompts below.

Developing:

- What are you working on in this session?
-
-
-
-

Performing

- Where can we put you under pressure today?
-
-
-
-

Supporting

- What do you need to get from me or team mates to have a good session?
- What did you enjoy most about today's session?
-
-
-
-

Reviewing

- Here are a few things I observed about this session that were successful_____.
- What are your big successes or learning points from today?
-
-
-
-

PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS FOR DEVELOPING STRENGTH ATHLETES

CHARACTERISTIC	Contextual Definitions: See it, Do it, Share it.	Training: How I as a coach support these being developed, challenge these to test them, reinforce them	Performance: What will I see in their competition execution if successful.
Commitment			
Focus and distraction control			
Effective and controllable imagery			
Realistic performance Evaluations			
Quality practice			
Goal setting			
Coping with pressure			
Planning and organisation			
Creating & using support networks			
Self-Awareness			

DEVELOPING PERFORMANCE UNDER PRESSURE

You can help an athlete develop tolerance to pressure by recreating the feelings of pressure in training, it is not necessary to fully recreate a competition to gain pressure tolerance.

To do this the athlete(s) must consent and be involved in creating the pressure process, otherwise it may be considered abusive it will also not develop pressure tolerance in them.

Step one: Ask the athlete if they want to do this. Explain they don't have to and there is no pressure.

Step two: Ask the athlete what the things are they find most stressful about competing/training develop a list and rank them in order of most stressful.

Step three: Using the variables below come up with the easiest ways to recreate the feelings associated with pressure.

Physical

- Task demands (Exercise selection, order etc)
- Environment (Location, climate, distraction)
- Fatigue (Pre fatigued or tired etc)

Psychological

- Judgement (rating by others or exposure to onlookers)
- Rewards (Meaningful wins, prizes or bets)
- Consequences (Forfeits or losses)

Step four: begin with the lowest ranked stressor and execute that approach. Review with the athlete how they coped, allow them to be in control and seek to encourage them to continue with the process when its difficult. The stressor does not have to be increased it can just be maintained.

The aim is that with exposure the athlete becomes desensitised to that pressure. You can also monitor heart rate and that may give you biological feedback as to how the stressor effected the athlete and when they become less bothered by it.

As the athlete progresses with the athlete's permission continue up the ranked list of stressors.

Conduct a review of how the athlete performed under pressure and what coping strategies they used to maintain composure, and how they now view the stressor.



CONSTRAINTS BASED COACHING

How coaches create skill development. A constraint is an approach that the coach would apply to impact the way an athlete performs a skill it might be verbal or physical.

Verbal

The language around the understanding of the technical model is a shared mental model. When coaches use cues which are relative to performance, they are imprecise.

For example: “knees out”. ‘Knees out’ tells the athlete what needs to change however “Knees tracking over toes in the first pull” is specific. Whereas an athlete could with the first cue overuse the instruction.

If you have an understanding of a precise technical model that you want your athletes to learn, then coaching them around that model will enable a culture of technique understanding and skill development.

External vs Internal coaching cues

Internal cues are related to internal biomechanical features of the body.

For example: “Contract your glute extend your knee”.

External cues are body in relation to the world.

For example: “Drive your feet through the floor”. “Punch under the bar.”

Research shows that external cues produce greater force and smoother more coordinated movements.

Physical: Task

We don't always think through our movements with cues we often respond to the environment.

For example, when coaches ask lifters to stand with their toes on the end of the platform, they are creating the constraints that the lifter will not jump forward. The environment and constraints shape the development of the skill.

There are many ways of shaping skills by constraints.

As you develop and explore verbal and physical methods of skill development it may be beneficial to keep a note of new approaches:

HIERARCHY OF VALUES

People value different things.

Two stone masons are working in a quarry. One says, “I am working to provide for my family” the other says “I am building a cathedral”. Both are right, both are working towards different things they value and may then try to solve problems differently.

When you know what it is you value you can make decisions faster and take a best action that aligns with your values under difficult circumstances. Your values will change over time as you have different experiences.

Coaching will present difficult circumstances when you clash with different ideas/people.

In times where you experience this difficulty it will be beneficial to check and see if you are working towards or against your values.

You will also find that when you get the most intrinsic reward from your coaching it may be because you are working in alignment with your values.



What are the top 5 values or qualities you want to develop most in people you coach? Write in the boxes below:

SESSION NOTES

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Quick reference block goals: Physical, technical, or behavioural

Each column represents a training block										
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Coach development goal(s) for session?

Things I did well in the session?

Things I need to improve in the next session?

External feedback points (Video/ Observer/Athlete feedback)

Questions for later thinking

Wisdom, insights, and nuggets

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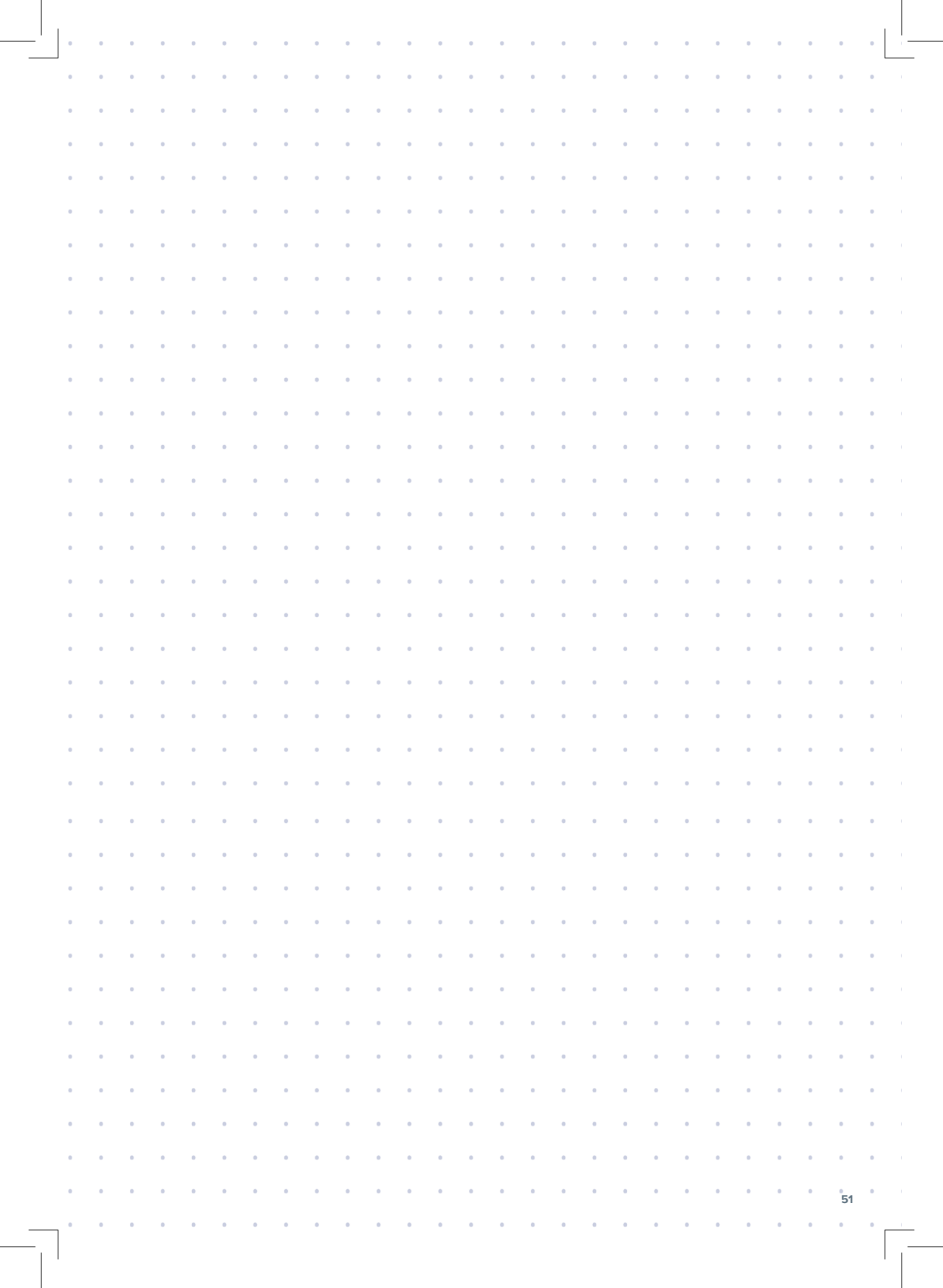
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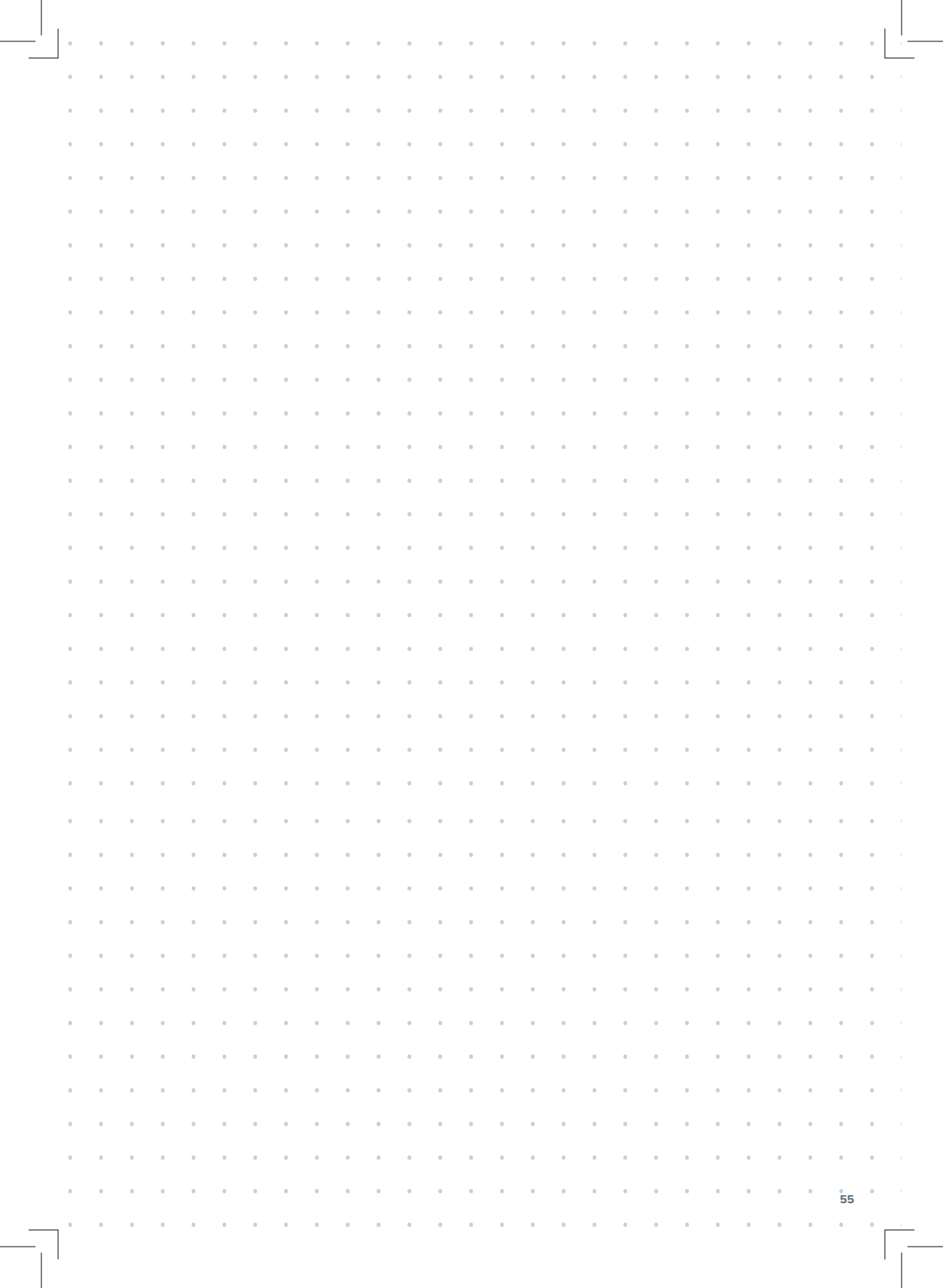
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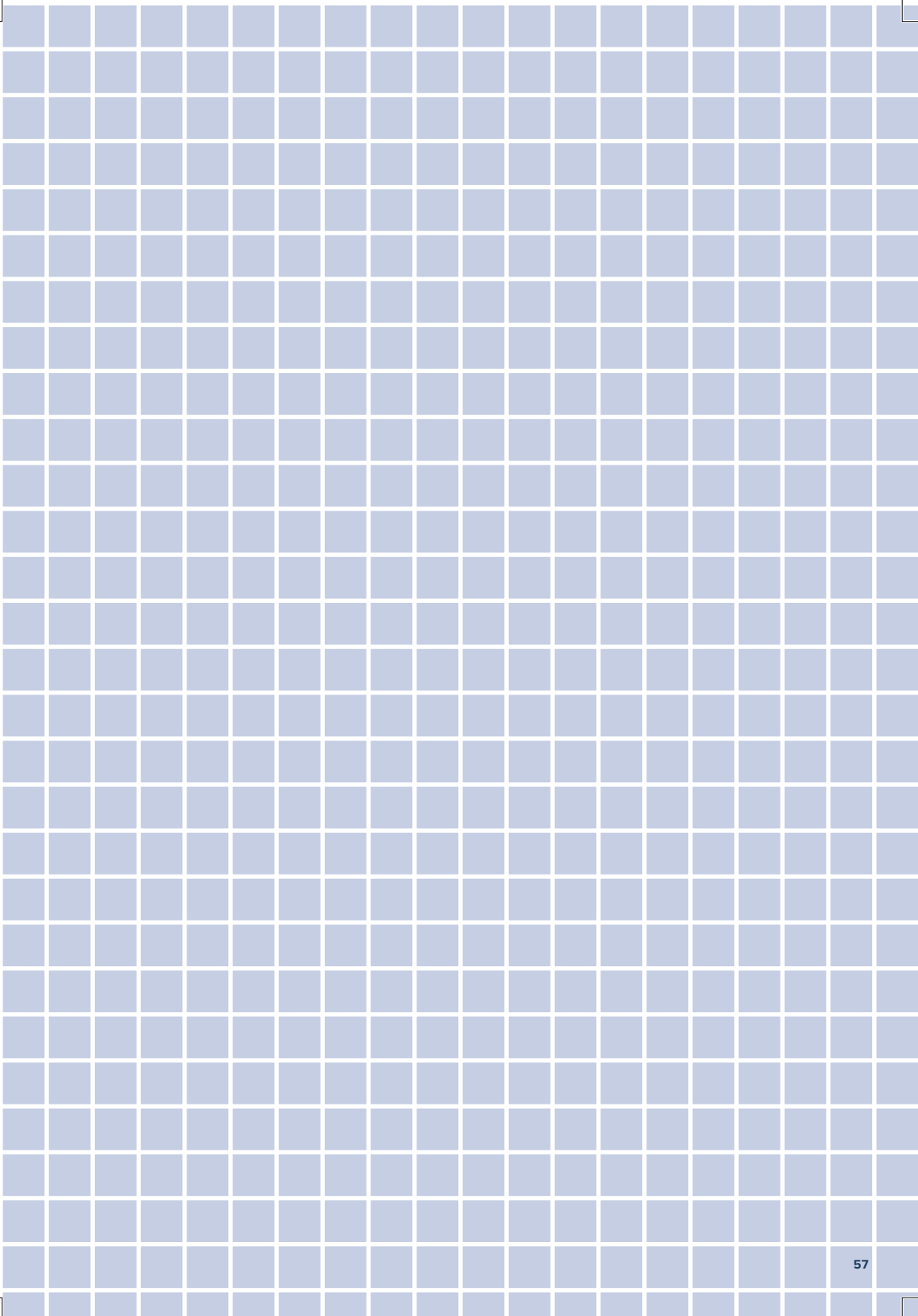
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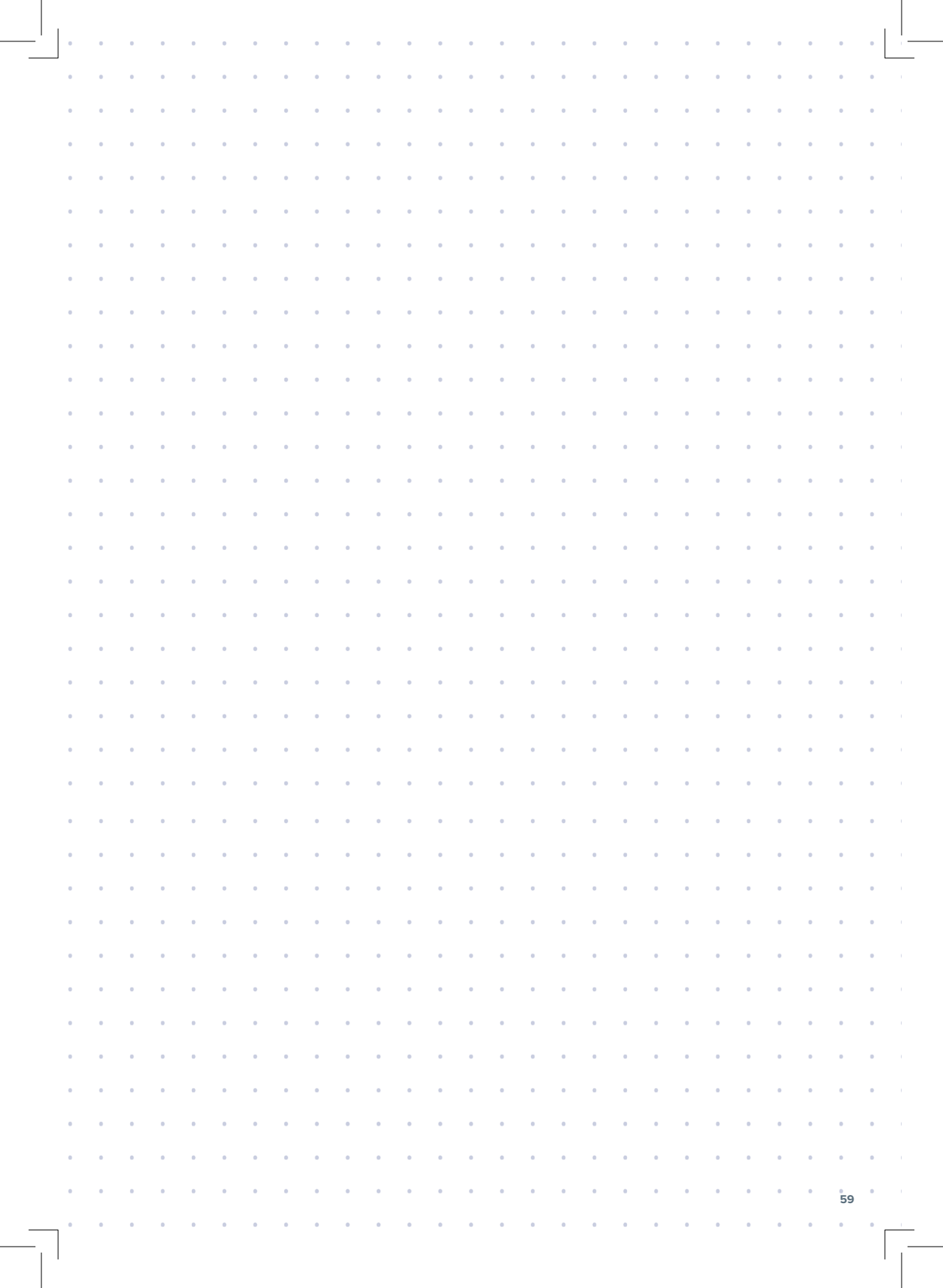
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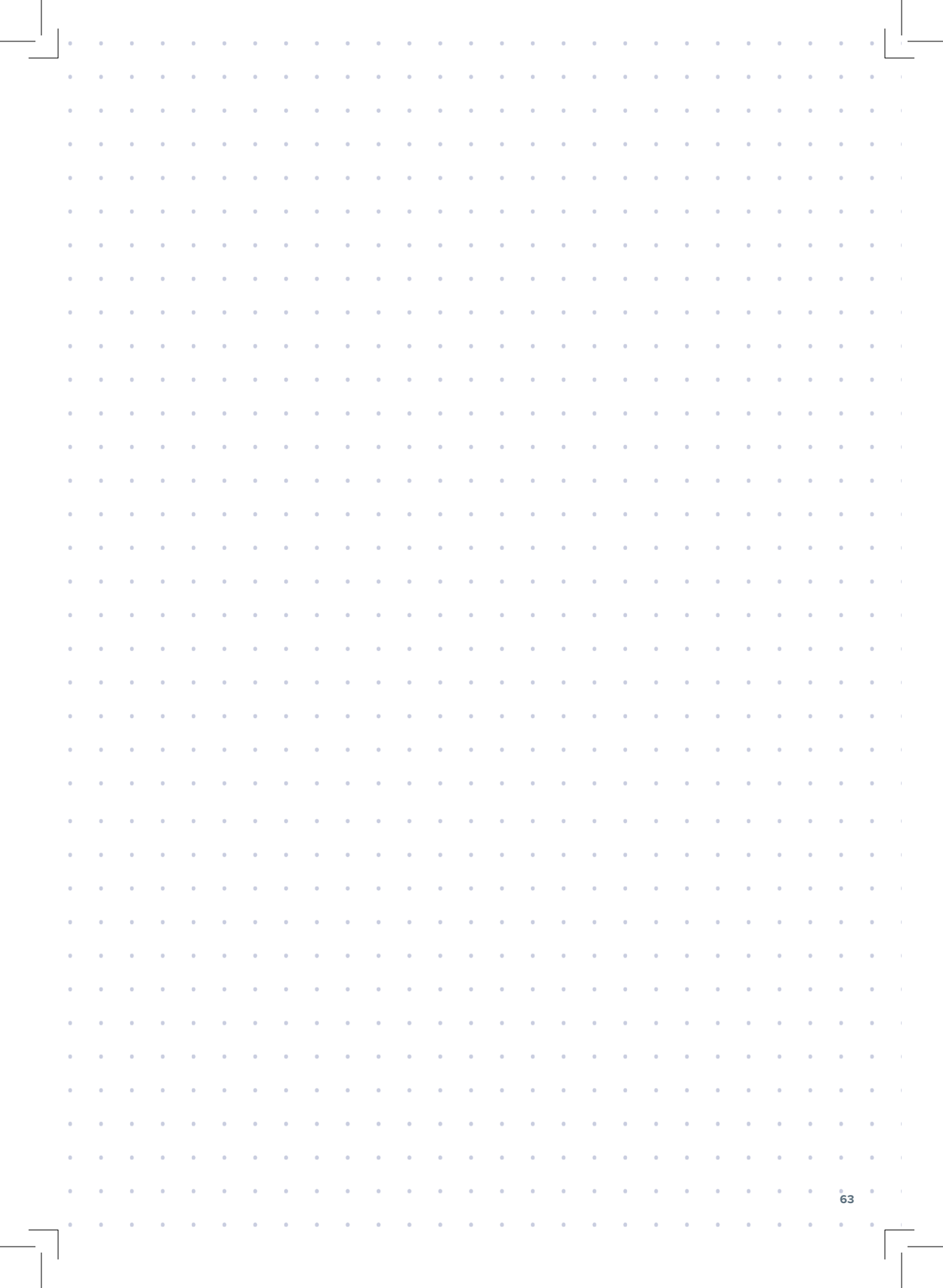
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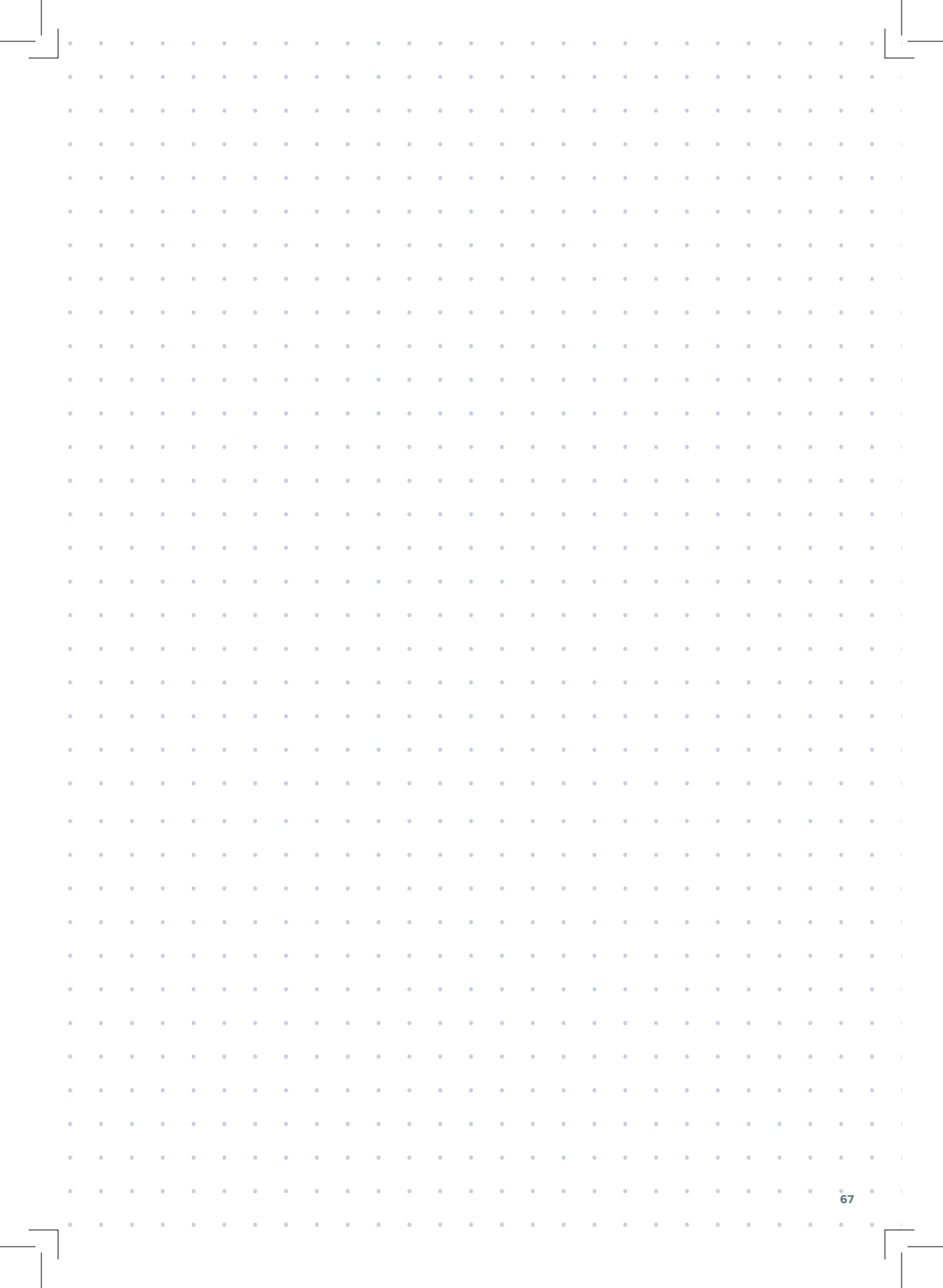
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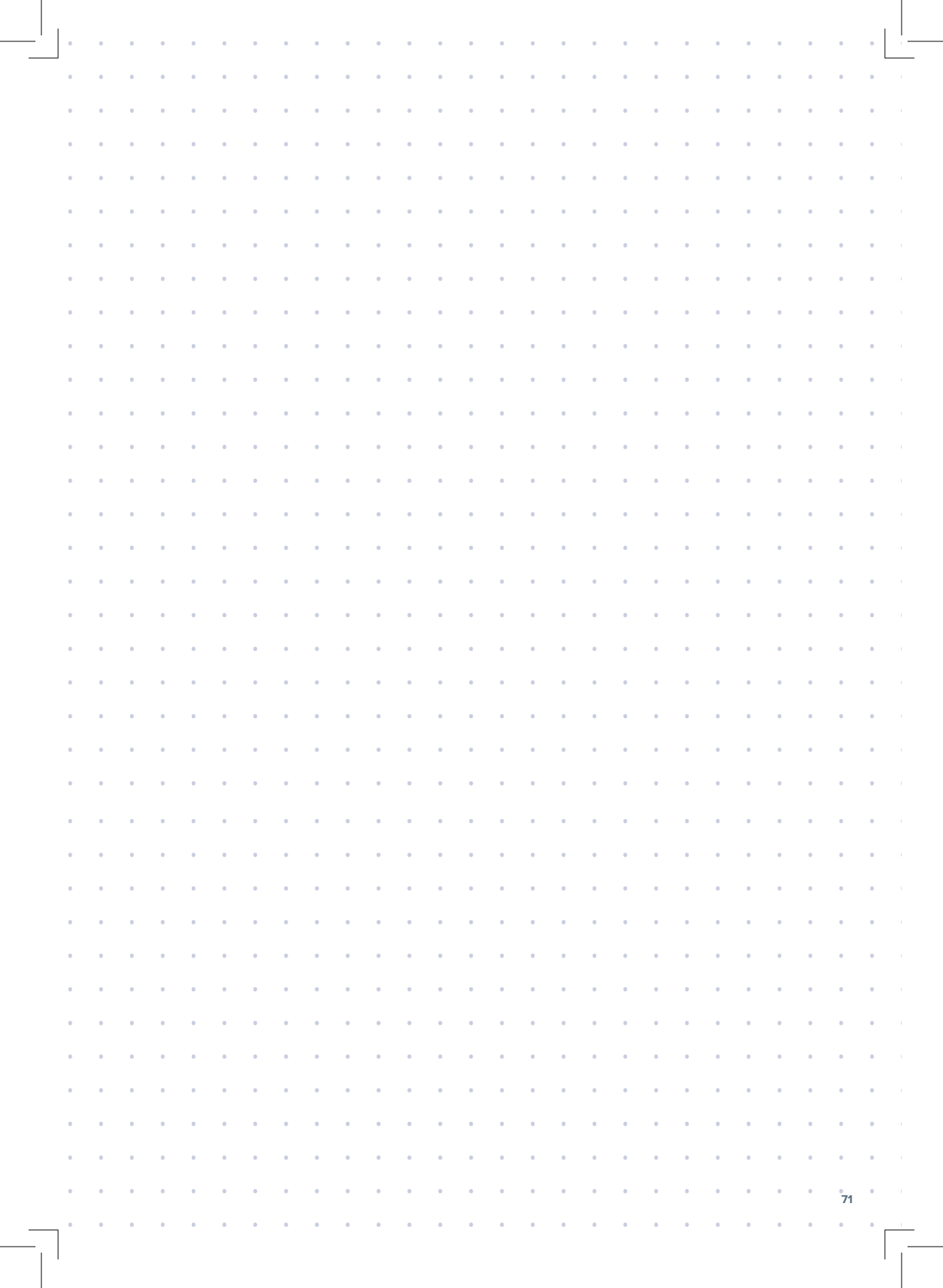
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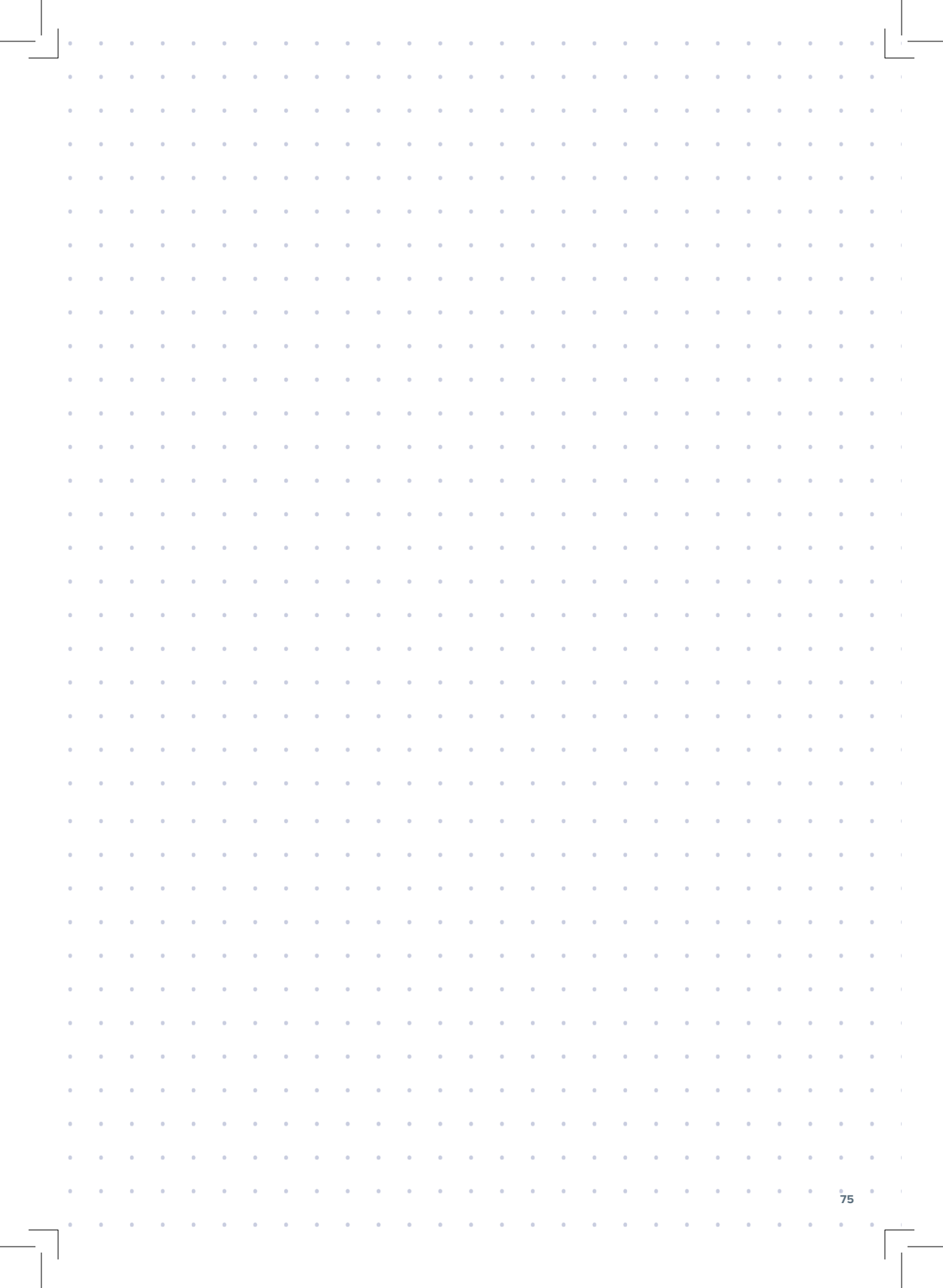
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