indent.pl

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Abstract



indent.pl is a Perl script that indents .tex files according to an indentation
scheme that the user can modify to suit their taste. Environments, including those
with alignment delimiters (such as tabular), commands, including those that can
split braces and brackets across lines, are usually handled correctly by the script.

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1 Before we begin

1.1 Thanks

I first created indent.pl to help me format chapter files in a big project. After I blogged about it on the TEX stack exchange [1] I received some positive feedback and follow-up feature requests. A big thank you to Harish Kumar who has really helped to drive the script forward and has put it through a number of challenging tests— I look forward to more challenges in the future Harish!

The yaml-based interface of indent.pl was inspired by the wonderful arara tool; any similarities are deliberate, and I hope that it is perceived as the compliment that it is. Thank you to Paulo Cereda and the team for releasing this awesome tool; I initially worried that I was going to have to make a GUI for indent.pl, but the release of arara has meant there is no need. Thank you to Paulo for all of your advice and encouragement.

1.2 License

indent.pl is free and open source, and it always will be. Before you start using it on any important files, bear in mind that indent.pl has the option to overwrite your .tex files. It will always make at least one backup (you can choose how many it makes, see page 6) but you should still be careful when using it. The script has been tested on many files, but there are some known limitations (see Section 5). You, the user, are responsible for ensuring that you maintain backups of your files before running indent.pl on them. I think it is important at this stage to restate an important part of the license here:

This program is distributed in the hope that it will be useful, but WITHOUT ANY WARRANTY; without even the implied warranty of MERCHANTABILITY or FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. See the GNU General Public License for more details.

There is certainly no malicious intent in releasing this script, and I do hope that it works as you expect it to— if it does not, please first of all make sure that you have the

correct settings, and then feel free to let me know with a complete minimum working example as I would like to improve the code as much as possible.

Before you try the script on anything important (like your thesis), test it out on the sample files that come with it in the samples directory.

2 Demonstration: before and after

Let's give a demonstration of some before and after code—after all, you probably won't want to try the script if you don't much like the results.

As you look at listings 1 to 6, remember that indent.pl is just following its rules—there is nothing particular about these commands. All of the rules can be modified so that each user can personalize their indentation scheme.

In each of the samples given in listings 1 to 6 the 'before' case is a 'worst case scenario' with no effort to make indentation. The 'after' result would be the same, regardless of the leading white space at the beginning of each line which is stripped by indent. \hookrightarrow pl (unless a verbatim-like environment or noIndentBlock is specified—more on this in Section 4).

LISTING 1: filecontents before

LISTING 2: filecontents after

```
\begin{filecontents}{mybib.bib}
                                          \begin{filecontents}{mybib.bib}
@online{strawberryperl,
                                              @online{strawberryperl,
title="Strawberry Perl",
                                                 title="Strawberry Perl",
url="http://strawberryperl.com/"}
                                                 url="http://strawberryperl.com/"}
@online{cmhblog,
                                              @online{cmhblog,
title="A Perl script ...
                                                 title="A Perl script for ...
                                                 url="...
url="...
\end{filecontents}
                                          \end{filecontents}
```

LISTING 3: tikzset before

LISTING 4: tikzset after

```
\tikzset{
shrink inner sep/.code={
    \pgfkeysgetvalue...
    \pgfkeysgetvalue...
}
}
\tikzset{
    shrink inner sep/.code={
        \pgfkeysgetvalue...
        \pgfkeysgetvalue...
    }
}
```

LISTING 5: pstricks before

LISTING 6: pstricks after

```
\def\Picture#1{%
                                             \def\Picture#1{%
\def\stripH{#1}%
                                                \def\stripH{#1}%
\begin{pspicture}[showgrid...
                                                \begin{pspicture}[showgrid...
\psforeach{\row}{%
                                                    \psforeach{\row}{%
\{\{3,2.8,2.7,3,3.1\}\},\% \le 0 only this
                                                       \{\{3,2.8,2.7,3,3.1\}\},\% <===
\{2.8,1,1.2,2,3\},\%
                                                       \{2.8,1,1.2,2,3\}, \%
}{%
                                                       }{%
\expandafter...
                                                       \expandafter...
                                                \end{pspicture}}
\end{pspicture}}
```

3 How to use the script

There are two ways to use indent.pl: from the command line, and using arara. We will discuss how to change the settings and behaviour of the script in Section 4.

3.1 Executable files

indent.pl ships with a few standalone exectuble files:

- indent.exe for Windows users
- indent for other Linux and MAC users

This means that you can use the script with or without a Perl distribution. If you plan to use indent.pl (i.e, the original Perl script) then you will need a few standard Perl modules— see appendix A on page 13 for details.

In what follows, we will always refer to indent.pl, but depending on your operating system and preference, you might substitute indent.exe or simply indent.

3.2 From the command line

indent.pl has a number of different switches/flags/options, which can be combined in any way that you like. indent.pl produces a .log file, indent.log every time it is run. There is a base of information that is written to indent.log, but other additional information will be written depending on which of the following options are used.

```
indent.pl myfile.tex
```

This will simply output to your terminal; myfile.tex will not be changed in any way using this command.

```
-w indent.pl -w myfile.tex
```

This will overwrite myfile.tex, but it will make a copy of myfile.tex first. You can control the name of the extension (default is .bak), and how many different back-ups are made—more on this in Section 4; see backupExtension and onlyOneBackUp.

Note that if indent.pl can not create the backup, then it will exit without touching your original file; an error message will be given asking you to check the permissions of the backup file.

```
-o indent.pl -o myfile.tex outputfile.tex
```

This will indent myfile.tex and output it to outputfile.tex, overwriting it (outputfiletex) if it already exists. Note that if indent.pl is called with both the -w and -o switches, then -w will be ignored and -o will take priority (this seems safer than the other way round).

Note that using -o is equivalent to using indent.pl myfile.tex > outputfile. \hookrightarrow tex

```
-s indent.pl -s myfile.tex
```

Silent mode: no output will be given to the terminal.

-t indent.pl -t myfile.tex

Tracing mode: verbose output will be given to indent.log. This is useful if indent.pl has made a mistake and you're trying to find out where and why.

-l indent.pl -l myfile.tex

Local settings: you might like to read Section 4 before using this switch. indent -- .pl will always load defaultSettings.yaml and if it is called with the -l switch and it finds localSettings.yaml in the same directory as myfile.tex then these settings will be added to the indentation scheme.

3.3 From arara

Using indent.pl from the command line is fine for some folks, but others may find it easier to use from arara. indent.pl ships with an arara rule, indent.yaml, which you can either copy it to the directory of your other arara rules, or otherwise add the indent.pl directory to your araraconfig.yaml file.

Once you have told arara where to find your indent rule, you can use it any of the following ways (or combinations thereof).

LISTING 7: arara samples

```
1  % arara: indent
2  % arara: indent: {overwrite: yes}
3  % arara: indent: {output: myfile.tex}
4  % arara: indent: {silent: yes}
5  % arara: indent: {trace: yes}
6  % arara: indent: {localSettings: yes}
7  \documentclass{article}
8  ...
```

Hopefully the use of these rules is fairly self-explanatory, but for completeness Table 1 shows the relationship between arran orb-tags and the switches given in Section 3.2.

TABLE 1: arara orb tags and corresponding switches

arara orb tags switch overwrite -w output -o silent -s trace -t localSettings -l		
output -o silent -s trace -t	arara orb tags	switch
silent -s trace -t	overwrite	-w
trace -t	output	-0
	silent	-s
localSettings -1	trace	-t
	localSettings	-1

4 default, user, and local settings

indent.pl loads its settings from defaultSettings.yaml (rhymes with camel). The idea is to separate the behaviour of the script from the internal working—this is very similar to the way that we separate content from form when writing our documents in LATEX.

4.1 defaultSettings.yaml

If you look in defaultSettings.yaml you'll find the switches that govern the behaviour of indent.pl. The code is commented, but here is a description of what each switch is designed to do. The default value is given in each case.

You can certainly feel free to edit defaultSettings.yaml, but this is not ideal as it may be overwritten when you update your distribution—all of your hard work tweaking the script would be undone! Don't worry, there's a solution—feel free to peek ahead to Section 4.3 if you like.

defaultIndent "\t"

This is the default indentation (\t means a tab) used in the absence of other details for the command or environment we are working with—see indentRules for more details (page 8).

If you're interested in experimenting with indent.pl then you can remove all indentation by setting defaultIndent: ""

backupExtension .bak

If you call indent.pl with the -w switch (to overwrite myfile.tex) then it will create a backup file before doing any indentation: myfile.bak0

By default, every time you call indent.pl after this with the -w switch it will create myfile.bak1, myfile.bak2, etc.

onlyOneBackUp 0

If you don't want a backup for every time that you call indent.pl (so you don't want myfile.bak1, myfile.bak2, etc) and you simply want myfile.bak (or whatever you chose backupExtension to be) then change onlyOneBackUp to 1.

indentPreamble 0

The preamble of a document can sometimes contain some trickier code for indent -.pl to work with. By default, indent.pl won't try to operate on the preamble,
but if you'd like it to try then change indentPreamble to 1.

alwaysLookforSplitBraces 1

This switch tells indent.pl to look for commands that can split braces across lines, such as parbox, tikzset, etc. In older versions of indent.pl you had to specify each one in checkunmatched—this clearly became tedious, hence the introduction of alwaysLookforSplitBraces.

As long as you leave this switch on (set to 1) you don't need to specify which commands can split braces across lines—you can ignore the fields checkunmatched and checkunmatchedELSE described later.

alwaysLookforSplitBrackets 1

This switch tells indent.pl to look for commands that can split *brackets* across lines, such as psSolid, pgfplotstabletypeset, etc. In older versions of indent—.pl you had to specify each one in checkunmatchedbracket—this clearly became tedious, hence the introduction of alwaysLookforSplitBraces.

As long as you leave this switch on (set to 1) you don't need to specify which commands can split brackets across lines—you can ignore checkunmatchedbracket described later.

lookForAlignDelims This is the first example of a field in defaultSettings.yaml that has more than one line; listing 8 shows more details.

LISTING 8: lookForAlignDelims

1 lookForAlignDelims:
2 tabular: 1
3 align: 1
4 align*: 1

```
5
      alignat: 1
 6
      alignat*: 1
7
      cases: 1
 8
      dcases: 1
 9
      aligned: 1
      pmatrix: 1
10
11
      listabla: 1
```

The environments specified in this field will be operated on in a special way by indent.pl. In particular, it will try and align each column by its alignment tabs. It does have some limitations (discussed further in Section 5), but in many cases it will produce results such as those in listings 9 and 10.

LISTING 9: tabular before

```
LISTING 10: tabular after
```

```
\begin{tabular}{cccc}
                                      \begin{tabular}{cccc}
2
 1& 2 &3
                 &4\\
                                   2
                                       1 & 2 & 3 & 4 \\
                                             & 6 &
3
 5& &6
               &\\
                                   3
                                       5 &
  \end{tabular}
                                     \end{tabular}
```

If you find that indent.pl does not perform satisfactorily on such environments then you can either remove them from lookForAlignDelims altogether, or set the relevant key to 0, for example tabular: 0, or if you just want to ignore specific instances of the environment, you could wrap them in something from noIndentBlock (see listing 12).

You can populate lookForAlignDelims with any other environments that you have that contain &, in any order that you wish. If you change your mind, just turn them off by setting them to 0 instead.

verbatimEnvironments A field that contains a list of environments that you would like left completely alone—no indentation will be done to environments that you have specified in this field—see listing 11.

LISTING 11: verbatimEnvironments

```
verbatimEnvironments:
1
2
      verbatim: 1
3
      1stlisting: 1
```

Note that if you put an environment in verbatimEnvironments and in other fields such as lookForAlignDelims or noAdditionalIndent then indent.pl will always prioritize verbatimEnvironments.

noIndentBlock If you have a block of code that you don't want indent.pl to touch (even if it is not a verbatim-like environment) then you can wrap it in an environment from noIndentBlock; you can use any name you like for this, provided you populate it as demonstrate in listing 12.

LISTING 12: noIndentBlock

```
noIndentBlock:
2
      noindent: 1
3
      cmhtest: 1
```

Of course, you don't want to have to specify these as null environments in your code, so you use them with a comment symbol, %, followed by as many spaces (possibly none) as you like; see listing 13 for example.

LISTING 13: noIndentBlock demonstration

noAdditionalIndent If you would prefer some of your environments or commands not to receive any additional indent, then populate noAdditionalIndent; see listing 14. Note that these environments will still receive the *current* level of indentation unless they belong to verbatimEnvironments, or noIndentBlock.

LISTING 14: noAdditionalIndent

```
noAdditionalIndent:
 1
 2
       document: 1
 3
       pccexample: 1
 4
       pccdefinition: 1
 5
       problem: 1
 6
       exercises: 1
7
       pccsolution: 1
 8
       foreach: 0
9
       widepage: 1
       comment: 1
10
       \[: 1
11
       \]: 1
12
13
       frame: 0
```

Note in particular from listing 14 that if you wish content within \[and \] to receive no additional content then you have to specify *both* as 1 (the default is 0). If you do not specify both as the same value you may get some interesting results!

indentRules If you would prefer to specify individual rules for certain environments or commands, just populate indentRules; see listing 15

LISTING 15: indentRules

```
1 indentRules:
2 myenvironment: "\t\t"
3 anotherenvironment: "\t\t\t\t"
4 \[: "\t"
```

Note that in contrast to noAdditionalIndent you do not need to specify both \[and \] in this field.

If you put an environment in both noAdditionalIndent and in indentRules then indent.pl will resolve the conflict by ignoring indentRules and prioritizing noAdditionalIndent. You will get a warning message in indent.log; note that

you will only get one warning message per command or environment. Further discussion is given in Section 4.2.

indentAfterHeadings This field enables the user to specify indentation rules that take effect after heading commands such as \part, \chapter, \section, \subsection* etc. This field is slightly different from all of the fields that we have considered previously, because each element is itself a field which has two elements: indent and level.

LISTING 16: indentAfterHeadings

```
1
   indentAfterHeadings:
 2
       part:
 3
           indent: 0
 4
           level: 1
 5
        chapter:
 6
           indent: 0
7
           level: 2
 8
        section:
 9
           indent: 0
10
           level: 3
11
```

The default settings do not place indentation after a heading—you can easily switch them on by changing indent: 0 to indent: 1. The level field tells indent.pl the hierarchy of the heading structure in your document. You might, for example, like to have both section and subsection set with level: 3 because you do not want the indentation to go too deep.

You can add any of your own custom heading commands to this field, specifying the level as appropriate. You can also specify your own indentation in indentRules- you will find the default indentRules contains chapter: " " which tells indent.pl simply to use a space character after \chapter headings (once indent is set to 1 for chapter).

The following fields are marked in red, as they are not necessary unless you wish to micro manage your indentation scheme.

checkunmatched Assuming you keep alwaysLookforSplitBraces set to 1 (which is the default) then you don't need to worry about checkunmatched.

> Should you wish to deactivate alwaysLookforSplitBraces by setting it to 0, then you can populate checkunmatched with commands that can split braces across lines—see listing 17.

LISTING 17: checkunmatched

```
checkunmatched:
2
      parbox: 1
3
      vbox: 1
```

checkunmatchedELSE Similarly, assuming you keep alwaysLookforSplitBraces set to 1 (which is the default) then you don't need to worry about checkunmatchedELSE.

As in checkunmatched, should you wish to deactivate alwaysLookforSplitBraces by setting it to 0, then you can populate checkunmatchedELSE with commands that can split braces across lines and have an 'else' statement—see listing 18.

LISTING 18: checkunmatchedELSE

```
1 checkunmatchedELSE:
2 pgfkeysifdefined: 1
3 DTLforeach: 1
4 ifthenelse: 1
```

Should you wish to deactivate alwaysLookforSplitBrackets by setting it to 0, then you can populate checkunmatchedbracket with commands that can split *brackets* across lines—see listing 19.

LISTING 19: checkunmatchedbracket

```
1 checkunmatchedbracket:
2  psSolid: 1
3  pgfplotstablecreatecol: 1
4  pgfplotstablesave: 1
5  pgfplotstabletypeset: 1
6  mycommand: 1
```

4.2 Hierarhy of fields

After reading the previous section, it should sound reasonable that noAdditionalIndent , indentRules, and verbatim all serve mutually exclusive tasks. Naturally, you may well wonder what happens if you choose to ask indent.pl to prioritize one above the other.

For example, let's say that you put the fields in listing 20 into one of your settings files.

LISTING 20: Conflicting ideas

```
1 indentRules:
2 myenvironment: "\t\t"
3 noAdditionalIndent:
4 myenvironment: 1
```

Clearly these fields conflict: first of all you are telling indent.pl that myenvironment should receive two tabs of indentation, and then afterwards you are telling it not to put any indentation in the environment. indent.pl will always make the decision to prioritize noAdditionalIndent above indentRules regardless of the order that you load them in your settings file. The first time it encounters myenvironment it will put a warning in indent.log and delete the offending key from indentRules so that any future conflicts won't have to be addressed.

Let's consider another conflicting example in listing 21

LISTING 21: More conflicting ideas

```
1 lookForAlignDelims:
2 myenvironment: 1
```

```
3 verbatimEnvironments:
4 myenvironment: 1
```

This is quite a significant conflict—we are first of all telling indent.pl to look for alignment delimiters in myenvironment and then telling it that actually we would like myenvironment to be considered as a verbatim-like environment. Regardless of the order that we state listing 21 the verbatim instruction will always win. As in listing 20 you will only receive a warning in indent.log the first time indent.pl encounters myenvironment as the offending key is deleted from lookForAlignDelims.

To summarize, indent.pl will prioritize the various fields in the following order:

- 1. verbatimEnvironments
- 2. noAdditionalIndent
- 3. indentRules

4.3 indentconfig.yaml (for user settings)

Editing defaultSettings.yaml is not ideal as it may be overwritten when updating your distribution—a better way to customize the settings to your liking is to set up your own settings file, mysettings.yaml (or any name you like, provided it ends with .yaml). The only thing you have to do is tell indent.pl where to find it.

indent.pl will always check your home directory for indentconfig.yaml, which is a plain text file you can create that contains the *absolute* paths for any settings files that you wish indent.pl to load. Note that Mac and Linux users home directory is ~/username while Windows (Vista onwards) is C:\Users\username. Listing 22 shows a sample indentconfig.yaml file.

LISTING 22: indentconfig.yaml

```
1 # Paths to user settings for indent.pl
2 #
3 # Note that the settings will be read in the order you
4 # specify here- each successive settings file will overwrite
5 # the variables that you specify
6
7 paths:
8 - /home/cmhughes/Documents/yamlfiles/mysettings.yaml
9 - /home/cmhughes/folder/othersettings.yaml
10 - /some/other/folder/anynameyouwant.yaml
11 - C:\Users\chughes\Documents\mysettings.yaml
12 - C:\Users\chughes\Documents\mysettings.yaml
```

Note that the .yaml files you specify in indentconfig.yaml will be loaded in the order that you write them in. Each file doesn't have to have every switch from defaultSettings .yaml; in fact, I recommend that you only keep the switches that you want to *change* in your settings files.

To get started with your own settings file, you might like to save a copy of defaultSettings ... yaml in another directory and call it, for example, mysettings.yaml. Once you have added the path to indentconfig.yaml feel free to start changing the switches and adding more environments to it as you see fit—have a look at listing 23 for an example that

uses four tabs for the default indent, and adds the tabbing environment to the list of environments that contains alignment delimiters.

LISTING 23: mysettings.yaml (example)

```
1 # Default value of indentation
2 defaultIndent: "\t\t\t\t"
3
4 # environments that have tab delimiters, add more
5 # as needed
6 lookForAlignDelims:
7 tabbing: 1
```

You can make sure that your settings are loaded by checking indent.log for details—if you have specified a path that indent.pl doesn't recognize then you'll get a warning, otherwise you'll get confirmation that indent.pl has read your settings file.



When editing .yaml files it is *extremely* important to remember how sensitive they are to spaces. I highly recommend copying and pasting from defaultSettings. \hookrightarrow yaml when you create your first whatevernameyoulike.yaml file.

If indent.pl can not read your .yaml file it will tell you so in indent.log.

4.4 localSettings.yaml

You may remember on page 5 we discussed the -1 switch that tells indent.pl to look for localSettings.yaml in the *same directory* as myfile.tex. This settings file will be read *after* defaultSettings.yaml and, assuming they exist, user settings.

In contrast to the *user* settings which can be named anything you like (provided that they are detailed in indentconfig.yaml), the *local* settings file must be called localSettings.yaml. It can contain any switches that you'd like to change—a sample is shown in listing 24.

LISTING 24: localSettings.yaml (example)

```
1  # Default value of indentation
2  defaultIndent: " "
3
4  # environments that have tab delimiters, add more
5  # as needed
6  lookForAlignDelims:
7   tabbing: 0
8
9  # verbatim environments- environments specified
10  # in this hash table will not be changed at all!
11 verbatimEnvironments:
12  cmhenvironment: 0
```

You can make sure that your local settings are loaded by checking indent.log for details—if localSettings.yaml can not be read then you will get a warning, otherwise you'll get confirmation that indent.pl has read localSettings.yaml.

4.5 Settings load order

indent.pl loads the settings files in the following order:

- 1. defaultSettings.yaml (always loaded, can not be renamed)
- anyUserSettings.yaml (and any other arbitrarily-named files specified in indentconfig
 .yaml)
- 3. localSettings.yaml (if found in same directory as myfile.tex and called with -1 switch; can not be renamed)

5 Known limitations

There are a number of known limitations of the script, and almost certainly quite a few that are *unknown*!

The main limitation is to do with the alignment routine of environments that contain delimiters—in other words, environments that are entered in lookForAlignDelims—
. Indeed, this is the only part of the script that can *potentially* remove lines from myfile.tex. Note that indent.log will always finish with a comparison of line counts before and after.

The routine works well for 'standard' blocks of code that have the same number of & per line, but it will not work well for blocks that do not—such examples include tabular—environments that use \multicolumn or perhaps spread cell contents across multiple lines.

Nested environments that contain alignment delimiters are also not supported—it would be best to wrap such nested blocks in an environment you specify in noIndentBlock (see page 7).

I hope that this script is useful to some—if you find an example where the script does not behave as you think it should, feel free to e-mail me or else come and find me on the http://tex.stackexchange.com site; I'm often around and in the chat room.

References

- [1] A Perl script for indenting tex files. URL: http://tex.blogoverflow.com/2012/08/a-perl-script-for-indenting-tex-files/.
- 2] CPAN: Comprehensive Perl Archive Network. URL: http://www.cpan.org/.
- [3] Strawberry Perl. URL: http://strawberryperl.com/.

A Required Perl modules

If you intend to use indent.pl and *not* one of the supplied standalone exectutable files, then you will need a few standard modules—if you can run the minimum code in listing 25 (perl helloworld.pl) then you will be able to run indent.pl, otherwise you may need to install the missing modules.

LISTING 25: helloworld.pl

```
1 #!/usr/bin/perl
2
3 use strict;
4 use warnings;
5 use FindBin;
6 use YAML::Tiny;
```

```
7 use File::Copy;
8 use File::Basename;
9 use Getopt::Std;
10 use File::HomeDir;
11
12 print "helloworld";
13 exit;
```

My default installation on Ubuntu 12.04 did *not* come with all of these modules as standard, but Strawberry Perl for Windows [3] did.

Installing the modules given in listing 25 will vary depending on your operating system and Perl distribution. For example, Ubuntu users might visit the software center, and Strawberry Perl users on Windows might use CPAN client. All of the modules are readily available on CPAN [2].