What commands are there for horizontal spacing?

Asked 10 years, 7 months ago   Modified 2 months ago   Viewed 1.5m times

▲

877

I know that `\:` in LaTeX produces a space when rendered.

Are there any alternatives, because my LaTeX renderer doesn't support `\:` (it renders it as text), and there is no help / FAQ that I can find.

▼

spacing   Edit tags

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edited Oct 9, 2012 at 22:52

doncherry
53.4k   31   161
232

asked Sep 24, 2012 at 22:18

Lucas
12k   7   23   19

8 ▲   `\bigskip` skips a line. Just leaving this here for me :) – Zero Pancakes Apr 7, 2020 at 6:08
   ▐

6 Answers

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1310

There are a number of horizontal spacing macros for LaTeX:

1. `\,` inserts a `.16667em` space in text mode, or `\thinmuskip` (equivalent to `3mu`) in math mode; there's an equivalent `\thinspace` macro;

2. `\!` is the *negative* equivalent to `\,`; there's an equivalent `\negthinspace` macro;

3. `\>` (or `\:`) inserts a `.2222em` space in text mode, or `\medmuskip` (equivalent to `4.0mu plus 2.0mu minus 4.0mu`) in math mode; there's an equivalent `\medspace`;

4. `\negmedspace` is the *negative* equivalent to `\medspace`;

5. `\;` inserts a `.2777em` space in text mode, or `\thickmuskip` (equivalent to `5.0mu plus 5.0mu`) in math mode; there's an equivalent `\thickspace`;

6. `\negthickspace` is the *negative* equivalent to `\thickspace`;

7. `\enspace` inserts a space of `.5em` in text or math mode;

8. `\quad` inserts a space of `1em` in text or math mode;

9. `\qquad` inserts a space of `2em` in text or math mode;

10. `\kern <len>` inserts a skip of `<len>` (may be negative) in text or math mode (a plain TeX skip); there's also a m ath-specific `\mkern <math len>`;

11. `\hskip <len>` (similar to `\kern`);

12. `\hspace{<len>}` inserts a space of length `<len>` (may be negative) in math or text mode (a LaTeX `\hskip`);

13. `\hphantom{<stuff>}` inserts space of length equivalent to `<stuff>` in math or text mode. `\phantom{<stuff>}` is similar, inserting a horizontal and vertical space that matches `<stuff>`. Should be `\protect`ed when used in fragile commands (like `\caption` and sectional headings);

14. `\ ` inserts what is called a "control space" (in text or math mode);

15. inserts an inter-word space in text mode (and is gobbled in math mode). Similarly for `\space` and `{ }`.

16. `~` inserts an "unbreakable" space (similar to an HTML ` `) (in text or math mode);

17. `\hfill` inserts a so-called "rubber length" or stretch between elements (in text or math mode). Note that you may need to provide a type of anchor to fill from/to; see What is the difference between `\hspace*{\fill}` and `\hfill`?;

Your usage *should* work in *math mode*, so try `$\:$`.

There are a number of horizontal spacing macros for LaTeX:

`a\,b`	a b	*a b*
`a\thinspace b`	a b	*a b*
`a\!b`	ab	*ab*
`a\negthinspace b`	ab	*ab*

`a\:b`	a b $a\,b$
`a\>b`	a b $a\,b$
`a\medspace b`	a b $a\,b$
`a\negmedspace b`	ab ab
`a\;b`	a b $a\;b$
`a\thickspace b`	a b $a\;b$
`a\negthickspace b`	ab ab
`$a\mkern\thinmuskip b$`	$a\,b$ (similar to `\,`)
`$a\mkern-\thinmuskip b$`	ab (similar to `\!`)
`$a\mkern\medmuskip b$`	$a\:b$ (similar to `\:` or `\>`)
`$a\mkern-\medmuskip b$`	ab (similar to `\negmedspace`)
`$a\mkern\thickmuskip b$`	$a\;b$ (similar to `\;`)
`$a\mkern-\thickmuskip b$`	ab (similar to `\negthickspace`)
`a\enspace b`	a b
`$a\enspace b$`	$a\ b$
`a\quad b`	a b
`$a\quad b$`	$a\quad b$
`a\qquad b`	a b
`$a\qquad b$`	$a\qquad b$
`a\hskip 1em b`	a b
`$a\hskip 1em b$`	$a\quad b$
`a\kern 1pc b`	a b
`$a\kern 1pc b$`	$a\quad b$
`$a\mkern 17mu b$`	$a\quad b$
`a\hspace{35pt}b`	a b
`$a\hspace{35pt}b$`	$a\qquad\quad b$
`axyzb`	axyzb
`a\hphantom{xyz}b`	a b (or just `\phantom`)
`$axyzb$`	$axyzb$
`$a\hphantom{xyz}b$`	$a\quad b$ (or just `\phantom`)
`a b`	a b
`$a b$`	ab
`a\space b`	a b
`$a\space b$`	ab
`a\ b`	a b
`$a\ b$`	$a\ b$
`a{ }b`	a b
`$a{ }b$`	ab
`a~b`	a b
`$a~b$`	$a\ b$
`a\hfill b`	a b
`$a\hfill b$`	a b

```latex
\documentclass{article}

\usepackage[margin=1in]{geometry}% Just for this example
\setlength{\parindent}{0pt}% Just for this example

\begin{document}

There are a number of horizontal spacing macros for LaTeX:

\begin{tabular}{lp{5cm}}
  \verb|a\,b|                    & a\,b \quad $a\, b$ \\
  \verb|a\thinspace b|           & a\thinspace b \quad $a\thinspace b$ \\
  \verb|a\!b|                    & a\!b \quad $a\!b$ \\
  \verb|a\negthinspace b|        & a\negthinspace b \quad $a\negthinspace b$
\\
  \verb|a\:b|                    & a\:b \quad $a\:b$ \\
  \verb|a\>b|                    & a\>b \quad $a\>b$ \\
  \verb|a\medspace b|            & a\medspace b \quad $a\medspace b$ \\
  \verb|a\negmedspace b|         & a\negmedspace b \quad $a\negmedspace b$ \\
  \verb|a\;b|                    & a\;b \quad $a\;b$ \\
  \verb|a\thickspace b|          & a\thickspace b \quad $a\thickspace b$ \\
  \verb|a\negthickspace b|       & a\negthickspace b \quad $a\negthickspace b$
\\
  \verb|$a\mkern\thinmuskip b$|  & $a\mkern\thinmuskip b$ (similar to
\verb|\,|) \\
  \verb|$a\mkern-\thinmuskip b$| & $a\mkern-\thinmuskip b$ (similar to
\verb|\!|) \\
  \verb|$a\mkern\medmuskip b$|   & $a\mkern\medmuskip b$ (similar to \verb|\:|
or \verb|\>|) \\
  \verb|$a\mkern-\medmuskip b$|  & $a\mkern-\medmuskip b$ (similar to \verb|
\negmedspace|) \\
  \verb|$a\mkern\thickmuskip b$| & $a\mkern\thickmuskip b$ (similar to
\verb|\;|) \\
  \verb|$a\mkern-\thickmuskip b$| & $a\mkern-\thickmuskip b$ (similar to \verb|
\negthickspace|) \\
  \verb|a\enspace b|             & a\enspace b \\
  \verb|$a\enspace b$|           & $a\enspace b$ \\
  \verb|a\quad b|                & a\quad b \\
  \verb|$a\quad b$|              & $a\quad b$ \\
  \verb|a\qquad b|               & a\qquad b \\
  \verb|$a\qquad b$|             & $a\qquad b$ \\
  \verb|a\hskip 1em b|           & a\hskip 1em b \\
  \verb|$a\hskip 1em b$|         & $a\hskip 1em b$ \\
  \verb|a\kern 1pc b|            & a\kern 1pc b \\
  \verb|$a\kern 1pc b$|          & $a\kern 1pc b$ \\
  \verb|$a\mkern 17mu b$|        & $a\mkern 17mu b$ \\
  \verb|a\hspace{35pt}b|         & a\hspace{35pt}b \\
  \verb|$a\hspace{35pt}b$|       & $a\hspace{35pt}b$ \\
  \verb|axyzb|                   & axyzb \\
  \verb|a\hphantom{xyz}b|        & a\hphantom{xyz}b (or just \verb|\phantom|)
\\
```

```
    \verb|$a\xyzb$|                    & $axyzb$ \\
    \verb|$a\hphantom{xyz}b$|          & $a\hphantom{xyz}b$ (or just \verb|
  \phantom|) \\
    \verb|a b|                         & a b \\
    \verb|$a b$|                       & $a b$ \\
    \verb|a\space b|                   & a\space b \\
    \verb|$a\space b$|                 & $a\space b$ \\
    \verb|a\ b|                        & a\ b \\
    \verb|$a\ b$|                       & $a\ b$ \\
    \verb|a{ }b|                       & a{ }b \\
    \verb|$a{ }b$|                     & $a{ }b$ \\
    \verb|a~b|                         & a~b \\
    \verb|$a~b$|                       & $a~b$ \\
    \verb|a\hfill b|                   & a\hfill b \\
    \verb|$a\hfill b$|                 & $a\hfill b$
  \end{tabular}

  \end{document}
```

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answered Sep 24, 2012 at 23:44

Werner ♦
587k   131   1382   2260

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18 ▲ @Werner -- `\ ` (backslash space) inserts a space equivalent to a word space; would be
   ⚑   usefully added. also, in `tabbing` , `\>` will "add space" as a function of skipping to the
        next "tab stop"; adding this information may or may not be useful. – barbara beeton Jan
        28, 2014 at 15:14

4 ▲   How about italics correction, with `\/` ? – Magnus Lie Hetland Mar 22, 2014 at 12:04
  ⚑

3 ▲   Don't forget `\kern` and `\mkern` for text and math modes, respectively, when you wish
  ⚑   to prevent the inadvertent addition of glue. – Steven B. Segletes May 8, 2014 at 0:28

2 ▲   I just noticed that `\hfil` has already been suggested but it hasn't been included in your
  ⚑   table. It's worthy to mention the construct `a\hfill\hfill b\hfill c` and the similar
        use of `\hfil` -- `a\hfil\hfil b\hfil c` – corporal May 8, 2014 at 5:27 🖉

9 ▲   @Mars: `mu` is a `m` ath `u` nit, and varies in length depending on the style you're in
  ⚑   (`\displaystyle` , `\textstyle` , `\scriptstyle` , or `\scriptscriptstyle`), similar to
        how `em` and `ex` varies within text mode based on the active font. Also, `x plus y`
        `minus z` refer to "rubber lengths" that can stretch from `x` to `x+y` or shrink to `x−z` , as
        needed, based on the surrounding text within the paragraph. If used within a box, or fully-
        stretchable environment (like a `tabular` 's `l` , `c` or `r` columns), it'll result in a spacing
        of `x` , since there is no need to stretch or shrink. – Werner ♦ Mar 3, 2018 at 20:45

|

0

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Thanks for the detailed list of space indentation.

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answered Feb 19 at 6:03

[Alison Jing March](#)
1

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u could use "," bc that's what I use and it works.

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answered Mar 22, 2022 at 0:11

[Satvik Sharma](#)
1

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Thanks for this great answer. It might help others to know that compilation with `pdflatex` (v3.14159265) and `lualatex` (v1.12.0), both from TeX Live 2020/Debian, seem to require a few changes:

1. load the package `amsmath` (defines `\!`, `\:`, `\>`, `\medspace`, `\negmedspace`, `\;`, `\thickspace`, and `\negthickspace`);

2. change the line `\verb|a\>b| & a\>b \quad $a\>b$ \\` to `\verb|$a\>b$| & $a\>b$ \\` (`\>` seems to be defined in math-mode only).

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answered Mar 15, 2021 at 10:58

[mgk](#)
363 2 10

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0

None of them do the job of a tab, afaik. For example, I want "c" to start at the exact same spot in both cases of the following example, where "a" and "b" can be anything:

```
a —tab— c
```

```
ab —tab— c
```

Only `\tabto{some distance}` , which requires `\usepackage{tabto}` , sometimes works.

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edited Apr 23, 2017 at 12:48　　　　answered Apr 23, 2017 at 12:42

Troy　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　pehlivan
13.5k　10　38　77　　　　　　　**1**

▲ Welcome to TeX.SE. Your posting reads like a new query; it does *not* appear to answer the
⚑ existing query. If you have a new query, please post it as a new question. That way, it'll be
seen by a lot more people, for sure. – Mico Apr 27, 2017 at 13:51 ✎

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0

do you know how put text @ [3:3] without space,i mean i want @[3:3]

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answered Dec 18, 2014 at 21:11
user69243

3 ▲ <u>Welcome to TeX.SX!</u> Your question won't be seen by many people here, so it would be best
⚑ to repost it as a fresh question. <u>Follow-up questions</u> like this are more than welcome!
Please use the "<u>Ask Question</u>" link for your new question; there you can link to this question
to provide the background. – egreg Dec 18, 2014 at 21:13

▲ \documentclass{article} \usepackage[utf8]{inputenc} \begin{document} $@$[3:3]
⚑ \end{document} – Benjamin McKay Dec 18, 2014 at 21:43

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