

Why Are You Being Forced to Do This?

Just in case I haven't talked about it enough in class, this document lists some of my reasons for requiring you to learn L^AT_EX.

The benefits of learning to use L^AT_EX are many. They include:

1. Pretty documents. Pride in your work. Attention to detail and style.
2. Typesetting forces you to really focus on the presentation of the homework problem you are typing up, and how to make your work as clear and concise as possible. For each section you write up one or two problems very carefully, making it as perfect as possible. Paying attention to the presentation will also make you pay attention to the logical structure of the argument itself.
3. The primary goal of Math210 is to make a bridge that gets you from the lower-level/computational courses to the upper-level/theoretical courses in the department. Part of the "mathematical maturity" process that you are going through concerns learning how to work within a structured logical framework, like dealing with abstract definitions and logical arguments. L^AT_EX is sort of like a computer version of that, where your notation matters and structure is important. It is a parallel topic that teaches the same skills as the mathematics we are learning.
4. Experience with a sort of mini-programming language, or at least experience with compiling, staying within strict syntax parameters, being able to deal with non-WYSIWYG situations, etc. This could be helpful to you later in your education or your career when you have to write computer programs and/or simple HTML webpages.
5. If you're serious about mathematics and continue in the subject then at some point you WILL have to use L^AT_EX. Every mathematics graduate student in the country uses it, and if you go to graduate school you will write your thesis in L^AT_EX. Even in industry you will have occasion to make respectable, typed-up mathematical documents. (Last semester when the Math club did its grad school visit, the number one thing the graduate students said was that they wished they'd seen L^AT_EX before grad school.)
6. It's another skill that you can list on your résumé that may set you apart from other job applicants.
7. When was the last time you handed in a chicken-scratch handwritten paper in a writing class?
8. Word's Equation Editor is so 1993. And it is ugly.
9. L^AT_EX is cool. So now YOU are cool. Because you can write stuff up in L^AT_EX, you rock.