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This command defines $\langle control\ sequence \rangle$ to be $\langle charcode \rangle$. Although \backslash chardef is most often used to define characters, you can also use it to give a name to a number in the range 0–255 even when you aren't using that number as a character code.

Example:

\chardef\percent = '\% 21\percent, {\it 19\percent} % Get the percent character in roman and in italic produces: $21\%,\ 19\%$