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`\spacefactor` [⟨*number*⟩ parameter]
`\spaceskip` [⟨*glue*⟩ parameter]
`\xspaceskip` [⟨*glue*⟩ parameter]
`\sfcode` ⟨*charcode*⟩ [⟨*number*⟩ table entry]

These primitive parameters affect how much space TEX puts between two adjacent words, i.e., the interword spacing. The normal interword spacing is supplied by the current font. As TEX is processing a horizontal list, it keeps track of the space factor f in `\spacefactor`. As it processes each input character c, it updates f according to the value of f_c, the space factor code of c (see below). For most characters, f_c is 1000 and TEX sets f to 1000. (The initial value of f is also 1000.) When TEX sees an interword space, it adjusts the size of that space by multiplying the stretch and shrink of that space by $f/1000$ and $1000/f$ respectively. Thus:

1) If $f = 1000$, the interword space keeps its normal value.
2) If $f < 1000$, the interword space gets less stretch and more shrink.
3) If $f > 1000$, the interword space gets more stretch and less shrink.

In addition, if $f \geq 2000$ the interword space is further increased by the "extra space" parameter associated with the current font.

Each input character c has an entry in the `\sfcode` (space factor code) table. The `\sfcode` table entry is independent of the font. Usually TEX just sets f to f_c after it processes c. However:

- If f_c is zero, TEX leaves f unchanged. Thus a character such as '`)`' in plain TEX, for which f_c is zero, is essentially transparent to the interword space calculation.
- If $f < 1000 < f_c$, TEX sets f to 1000 rather than to f_c, i.e., it refuses to raise f very rapidly.

The `\sfcode` value for a period is normally 3000, which is why TEX usually puts extra space after a period (see the rule above for the case $f \geq 2000$). Noncharacter items in a horizontal list, e.g., vertical rules, generally act like characters with a space factor of 1000.

You can change the space factor explicitly by assigning a different numerical value to `\spacefactor`. You can also override the normal interword spacing by assigning a different numerical value to `\xspaceskip` or to `\spaceskip`:

- `\xspaceskip` specifies the glue to be used when $f \geq 2000$; in the case where `\xspaceskip` is zero, the normal rules apply.
- `\spaceskip` specifies the glue to be used when $f < 2000$ or when `\xspaceskip` is zero; if `\spaceskip` is zero, the normal rules apply. The stretch and shrink of the `\spaceskip` glue, like that of the ordinary interword glue, is modified according to the value of f.

See page 76 of *The TEXbook* for the precise rules that TEX uses in calculating interword glue, and pages 285–287 of *The TEXbook* for the adjustments made to `\spacefactor` after various items in a horizontal list.