control sequence   **1**

`control sequence.`   A *control sequence* is a name for a TEX command.
A control sequence always starts with an escape character, usually a back-
slash (\). A control sequence takes one of two forms:

- A control word is a control sequence consisting of an escape character
  followed by one or more letters. The control word ends when TEX
  sees a nonletter. For instance, when TEX reads '`\hfill␣,␣the`', it
  sees six tokens: the control sequence '`\hfill`', comma, space, '`t`',
  '`h`', '`e`'. The space after '`\hfill`' ends the control sequence and is
  absorbed by TEX when it scans the control sequence. (For the text
  '`\hfill,␣the`', on the other hand, the comma both ends the control
  sequence and counts as a character in its own right.)

- A control symbol is a control sequence consisting of an escape char-
  acter followed by any character other than a letter—even a space or
  an end of line. A control symbol is self-delimited, i.e., TEX knows
  where it ends without having to look at what character comes after
  it. The character after a control symbol is never absorbed by the
  control symbol.

See page '`spaces`' for more information about spaces after control se-
quences.

TEX provides a great many predefined control sequences. The primitive
control sequences are built into the TEX computer program and thus are
available in all forms of TEX. Other predefined control sequences are
provided by plain TEX, the form of TEX described in this book.

You can augment the predefined control sequences with ones of your
own, using commands such as `\def` and `\let` to define them. Sec-
tion 'eplain' of this book contains a collection of control sequence def-
initions that you may find useful. In addition, your computing facility
may be able to provide a collection of locally developed TEX macros.