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\prevgraf $[\langle number \rangle \text{ parameter }]$

In horizontal mode, this parameter specifies the number of lines in the paragraph so far; in vertical mode, it specifies the number of lines in the previous paragraph. TEX only sets \prevgraf after it has finished breaking some text into lines, i.e., at a math display or at the end of a paragraph. See page 103 of The TEXbook for more details about it.