

kern

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kern. A *kern* indicates a change to the normal spacing between the items of a vertical or horizontal list. A kern can be either positive or negative. By putting a positive kern between two items, you push them further apart by the amount of the kern. By putting a negative kern between two items, you bring them closer together by the amount of the kern. For instance, this text:

```
11\quad 1\kern1pt 1\quad 1\kern-.75pt 1
```

produces letter pairs that look like this:

```
11 11 11
```

You can use kerns in vertical mode to adjust the space between particular pairs of lines.

A kern of size d is very similar to a glue item that has size d and no stretch or shrink. Both the kern and the glue insert or remove space between neighboring items. The essential difference is that T_EX considers two boxes with only kerns between them to be tied together. That is, T_EX won't break a line or a page at a kern unless the kern is immediately followed by glue. Bear this difference in mind when you're deciding whether to use a kern or a glue item for a particular purpose.

T_EX automatically inserts kerns between particular pairs of adjacent letters, thus adjusting the space between those letters and enhancing the appearance of your typeset document. For instance, the Computer Modern 10-point roman font contains a kern for the pair 'To' that brings the left edge of the 'o' under the 'T'. Without the kern, you'd get "Top" rather than "Top"—the difference is slight but noticeable. The metrics file (`.tfm` file) for each font specifies the placement and size of the kerns that T_EX automatically inserts when it is setting text in that font.