command   **1**

`command.`   A *command* instructs TEX to carry out a certain action. Every token that reaches TEX's stomach (see "anatomy of TEX", p. '`\anatomy`') acts as a command, except for those that are parts of arguments to other commands (see below). A command can be invoked by a control sequence, by an active character, or by an ordinary character. It might seem odd that TEX treats an ordinary character as a command, but in fact that's what it does: when TEX sees an ordinary character it constructs a box containing that character typeset in the current font.

A command can have arguments. The arguments of a command are single tokens or groups of tokens that complete the description of what the command is supposed to do. For example, the command '`\vskip 1in`' tells TEX to skip 1 inch vertically. It has an argument '`1in`', which consists of three tokens. The description of what `\vskip` is supposed to do would be incomplete without specifying how far it is supposed to skip. The tokens in the arguments to a command are not themselves considered to be commands.

Some examples of different kinds of TEX commands are:

- Ordinary characters, such as '`W`', which instructs TEX to produce a box containing a typeset 'W'
- Font-setting commands, such as `\bf`, which begins boldface type
- Accents, such as `\'`, which produces a grave accent as in 'è'
- Special symbols and ligatures, such as `\P` (¶) and `\ae` (æ)
- Parameters, such as `\parskip`, the amount of glue that TEX puts between paragraphs
- Math symbols, such as `\alpha` (α) and `\in` ($\in$)
- Math operators, such as `\over`, which produces a fraction