

command

1

command. A *command* instructs T_EX to carry out a certain action. Every token that reaches T_EX's stomach (see "anatomy of T_EX", 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 T_EX treats an ordinary character as a command, but in fact that's what it does: when T_EX 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 T_EX 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 T_EX commands are:

- Ordinary characters, such as 'W', which instructs T_EX to produce a box containing a typeset 'W'
- Font-setting commands, such as \bf, which begins boldface type
- Accents, such as \grave, 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 T_EX puts between paragraphs
- Math symbols, such as \alpha (α) and \in (\in)
- Math operators, such as \over, which produces a fraction