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The active character ‘~’, called a “tie”, produces a normal interword space between two words and links those words so that a line break will not occur between them. You should use a tie in any context where a line break would be confusing, e.g., before a middle initial, after an abbreviation such as “Dr.”, or after “Fig.” in “Fig. 8”.

Example:

P.D.Q.~Bach (1807--1742), the youngest and most
imitative son of Johann~S. Bach, composed the
{\sl Concerto for Horn and Hardart}.

produces:

P.D.Q. Bach (1807–1742), the youngest and most imitative son of Jo-
hann S. Bach, composed the *Concerto for Horn and Hardart*.