mark   **1**

`mark.`   A *mark* is an item that you can insert into a horizontal, vertical, or math list and later recover from within your output routine. Marks are useful for purposes such as keeping track of topics to appear in page headers. Each mark has a list of tokens—the "mark text"—associated with it. The `\mark` command (p. '`\mark`') expects such a token list as its argument, and appends an item containing that token list (after expansion) to whatever list TEX is currently building. The `\topmark`, `\firstmark`, and `\botmark` commands (p. '`\topmark`') can be used to retrieve various marks on a page. These commands are most often used in page headers and footers.

Here is a simplified example. Suppose you define a section heading macro as follows:

```
\def\section#1{\medskip{\bf#1}\smallskip\mark{#1}}
% #1 is the name of the section
```

This macro, when called, will produce a section heading in boldface and will also record the name of the section as a mark. You can now define the header for each printed page as follows:

```
\headline = {\ifodd\pageno \hfil\botmark\quad\folio
   \else \folio\quad\firstmark\hfil \fi}
```

Each even (left-hand) page will now have the page number followed by the name of the first section on that page, while each odd (right-hand) page will have the page number followed by the name of the last section on that page. Special cases, e.g., no sections starting on a page, will generally come out correctly because of how `\firstmark` and `\botmark` work.

When you split a page using the `\vsplit` command (p. '`\vsplit`') you can retrieve the mark texts of the first and last marks of the split-off portion with the `\splitfirstmark` and `\splitbotmark` commands (p. '`\splitfirstmark`').

See pages 258–260 of *The TEXbook* for a more precise explanation of how to create and retrieve marks.