1

\fam $[\langle number \rangle]$ parameter

When T_EX is in math mode, it ordinarily typesets a character using the font family given in its mathcode. However, when T_EX is in math mode and encounters a character whose class is 7 (Variable), it typesets that character using the font family given by the value of fam, provided that the value of fam is between 0 and 15. If the value of fam isn't in that range, fam uses the family in the character's mathcode as in the ordinary case. fam to fam has no effect.

By assigning a value to \fam you can change the way that T_EX typesets ordinary characters such as variables. For instance, by setting \fam to \ttfam, you cause T_EX to typeset variables using a typewriter font. Plain T_EX defines \tt as a macro that, among other things, sets \fam to \ttfam. Example:

\def\bf{\fam\bffam\tenbf} % As in plain TeX.