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\escapechar $[\langle number \rangle \text{ parameter }]$

This parameter specifies the ASCII code of the character that TEX uses to represent the escape character when it's converting a control sequence name to a sequence of character tokens. This conversion occurs when you use the \string command and also when TEX is producing diagnostic messages. The default value of the escape character is 92, the ASCII character code for a backslash. If \escapechar is not in the range 0–255, TEX does not include an escape character in the result of the conversion.

Example:

\escapechar = '!
the control sequence {\tt \string\bigbreak}
produces:
the control sequence !bigbreak