

`\kern`  $\langle dimen \rangle$

The effect of this command depends on the mode that T<sub>E</sub>X is in when it encounters it:

- In a horizontal mode, T<sub>E</sub>X moves its position to the right (for a positive kern) or to the left (for a negative kern).
- In a vertical mode, T<sub>E</sub>X moves its position down the page (for a positive kern) or up the page (for a negative kern).

Thus a positive kern produces empty space while a negative kern causes T<sub>E</sub>X to back up over something that it’s already produced. This notion of a kern is different from the notion of a kern in some computerized typesetting systems—in T<sub>E</sub>X, positive kerns push two letters *apart* instead of bringing them closer together.

A kern is similar to glue, except that (a) a kern can neither stretch nor shrink, and (b) T<sub>E</sub>X will only break a line or a page at a kern if the kern is followed by glue and is not part of a math formula. If T<sub>E</sub>X finds a kern at the end of a line or a page, it discards the kern. If you want to get the effect of a kern that never disappears, use `\hglue` or `\vglue`.

You can use `\kern` in math mode, but you can’t use `mu` units (see “mathematical unit”, p. ‘mathematical+unit’) for  $\langle dimen \rangle$ . If you want `mu` units, use `\mkern` (p. ‘mkern’) instead.

*Example:*

```
\centerline{$\Downarrow$}\kern 3pt % a vertical kern
\centerline{$\Longrightarrow$}\kern 6pt % a horizontal kern
  {\bf Heed my warning!}\kern 6pt % another horizontal kern
    $\Longleftarrow$}
\kern 3pt % another vertical kern
\centerline{$\Uparrow$}
```

*produces:*

$\Downarrow$   
 $\Rightarrow$  **Heed my warning!**  $\Leftarrow$   
 $\Uparrow$