control sequence **1**

`control sequence.` A *control sequence* is a name for a TEX command. A control sequence always starts with an escape character, usually a backslash (\). A control sequence takes one of two forms:

- A control word is a control sequence consisting of an escape character followed by one or more letters. The control word ends when TEX sees a nonletter. For instance, when TEX reads '`\hfill␣,␣the`', it sees six tokens: the control sequence '`\hfill`', comma, space, '`t`', '`h`', '`e`'. The space after '`\hfill`' ends the control sequence and is absorbed by TEX when it scans the control sequence. (For the text '`\hfill,␣the`', on the other hand, the comma both ends the control sequence and counts as a character in its own right.)
- A control symbol is a control sequence consisting of an escape character followed by any character other than a letter—even a space or an end of line. A control symbol is self-delimited, i.e., TEX knows where it ends without having to look at what character comes after it. The character after a control symbol is never absorbed by the control symbol.

See page '`spaces`' for more information about spaces after control sequences.

TEX provides a great many predefined control sequences. The primitive control sequences are built into the TEX computer program and thus are available in all forms of TEX. Other predefined control sequences are provided by plain TEX, the form of TEX described in this book.

You can augment the predefined control sequences with ones of your own, using commands such as `\def` and `\let` to define them. Section 'eplain' of this book contains a collection of control sequence definitions that you may find useful. In addition, your computing facility may be able to provide a collection of locally developed TEX macros.