

Basic text input

This document covers the basic rules \TeX has for text input. Please see `lshort.pdf` (“The Not So Short Introduction to \LaTeX ”) for a more comprehensive introduction.

- A blank line separates paragraphs.
- Some characters cannot be input directly. Precede such characters with a backslash to print them. E.g.: `~ # $ % ^ & _ { }`
- Quotation marks must be typed in explicitly. This is no MS Word that tries to guess what you’re typing! E.g. look at the source for the following sentence: “It’s difficult to type the word ‘discontinuous’ correctly.”
- Similarly, dashes and hyphens must also be typed according to context:
 1. For hyphenated words, use a hyphen (type one hyphen `-`)
e.g. co-ordinate
 2. For ranges of numbers, use an en-dash (type two hyphens `--`)
e.g. 13–18 months
 3. In a sentence, use an em-dash (type three hyphens `---`)
e.g. “Now wasn’t I about to—where’s he gone?”
or “Don’t—to quote a president—misunderestimate”
 4. To indicate letter omission, use *two* em-dashes (`-----`)
e.g. “Mr P—— lived in the town of Mt Q——”
- You can type a non-breaking space with a tilde `~`. Use this when you don’t want a line to break between the words it separates; eg Mr Knuth, Figure 1, etc. . . .
- An ellipsis (`...`) is typed with `\dots`. Use it before a period when finishing a trailing sentence. (See the previous dot point for an example.)
- Originally, \TeX input was plain ASCII text. To get accents, you needed to type things like `\’{e}` and `\~{n}` to get `é` and `ñ`. Nowadays it is better to use a richer input encoding scheme.

Include `\usepackage[utf8]{inputenc}`¹ to tell \TeX that you are giving it a unicode file. (Make sure that you tell your application that you want to indeed use this encoding scheme.²) Now you can type accents directly from the keyboard, so typing words like “résumé” or “naïve” is much more pleasant.

- Look in the source of the preceding dot point for the two methods of creating footnotes. To create margin notes, use the `\marginpar` command.

It’s real easy to make notes in the margin...

It’s real easy to make notes in the margin...

¹If you are exchanging your documents with people using Windows, it will be better for cross platform purposes to use the latin 1 encoding scheme — use `[latin1]` instead of `[utf8]`.

²Choose the appropriate document encoding in preferences or type `“%&encoding=Latin 1”` near the top of the document.