

Incipit: A Unicode-based Text Markup Language.

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The *Incipit Markup Language* (or *Incipit*, for short) is a plain text markup language that uses Unicode characters and the structure of the text itself to format documents. *Incipit* is also the name of an *awk(1)* script that converts *Incipit* documents to html or troff.

In the *Incipit Markup Language*, a paragraph is a block of text delimited by blank lines. A paragraph may be preceded by a section header and succeeded by a figure. Enumerations (also known as “lists”) are special types of paragraphs (although I interpret an enumeration as the continuation of the paragraph before it).

In this document, I call “*period*” sentences delimited by a period. I also call “*colon*” a segment of text delimited by a colon or semi-colon.

1. Punctuation

Incipit uses Unicode characters (called “*punctuation*” in this document), alongside the structure of the text, to format documents. For example, the section character (§ , U+00A7) is used to markup section headers. The bullet character (• , U+2022) is used to markup bulleted lists.

Inline punctuation. Punctuations are mostly used within a paragraph. Those punctuations (called inline punctuation) markup emphases, references, topics or preformatted text. Punctuations cannot be nested: a portion of text is either emphasized, or it is preformatted, never both. The types of inline punctuations are enumerated below.

- **Emphasis:** Text *between single quotes* is emphasized. The single quotes must be Unicode characters (U+2018) and (U+2019). Emphatic text is formatted in italic font and the punctuation is removed in the final document.
- **Topic:** Text “*between double quotes*” is topicalized. The double quotes must be Unicode characters (U+201C) and (U+201D). Topical text is formatted in italic font and the punctuation is preserved in the final document.
- **Reference:** Text «between double angle quotes» is reference. The angle quotes must be Unicode characters « (U+00AB) and » (U+00BB). References are not supported yet.
- **Preformatted:** Text between grave accents or between curly braces is preformatted. Those punctuation are regular ASCII punctuation. Preformatted text is formatted in monospaced font and the punctuation is removed in the final document.
- **Meta text:** Text between angle braces is meta text. It is formatted in monospaced font and the punctuation is kept in the final document.

Typing punctuation. If you use Unix, you can either configure your keybindings or configure the Compose key to insert punctuation and other characters not found on a regular keyboard.

1.1. Sections

Paragraphs can be grouped in sections, which can be nested. A section is a line whose first characters are section punctuations (§, U+00A7). A section can be marked by a one or more section punctuations. The number of times that punctuation occurs represents the level of the section. For example, a first-level section begins with §; a second-level section begins with §§, and so on.

1.2. Enumerations

An enumeration, also known as list, is a hierarchical grouping of periods, called the enumeration items. Each item begins with zero or more tab characters followed the enumeration punctuation (**•**, U+2022), also known as *bullet*. The number of tabs in the beginning of an item identifies the item level: zero tab for first-level items; one tab for second-level items; and so on.

Enumeration label. When formatted, each enumeration item is usually preceded by a bullet. However, it can be changed by following the enumeration punctuation by a string between parentheses. This can be used for ordered lists, when the label is a number or letter.

Enumeration incipit. Each enumeration item can have an incipit colon, which will be explained on the “§ *Incipit*” section below. The incipit colon is a colon describing the topic of the item.

The following is an example of enumeration.

A. First item: This is the first item of a labeled enumeration. This item also contains an incipit colon.

B. Second item: This is the second item of a labeled enumeration. It also contains an incipit colon.

C. Third item.

- First subitem of third item.
- Second subitem of third item.
- Third subitem of third item.
- Fourth subitem of third item.

D. Fourth item.

E. Fifth item.

2. Incipit

The word “*incipit*” comes from the Latin and means “*it begins*”. The incipit of a text is the first few words of the text. In the *Incipit Markup Language*, incipits are initial elements of the text used to format the text itself. The incipit of a document is its first paragraph (which contains the title and some meta information); the incipit of a paragraph is its first period (aka sentence); the incipit of a period is its first colon (the part separated by colon).

In the *Incipit Markup Language*, a text unit can have no incipit. A document without incipit is a document without title. A paragraph without incipit is a paragraph without its special first period. This implies that certain units of text are made up of two parts: an optional incipit and a body.

The incipit of a document. The first paragraph of a document is its incipit. If the document begins with a blank line or with a figure or enumeration, the document has no incipit. The first period (ie, the first sentence) of the document’s incipit is the title. If this period has an incipit colon, this colon is the main title and the rest is the subtitle. For example, this document has an incipit paragraph, which has an incipit period (the full title), which has an incipit colon (the main title). The remaining periods are interpreted depending on the output format. In troff, the second period is the author, the third period is the institution, and the following periods are the abstract of the document.

The incipit of a paragraph. If the first period of a paragraph begins with a period punctuation, this paragraph contains an incipit period. This incipit period, called the title of the paragraph, is formatted in bold font. In the source plain text of this document, the incipit of a paragraph is written alone in a line above the rest of the paragraph; but this is not necessary, the incipit period can be written in the same line of the rest of the paragraph.

The incipit of a period. In an enumeration, the first colon of the first period of an enumerated item is the item’s incipit colon. This incipit colon, called title of the enumeration, is formatted in bold font. The first enumeration of this document, listing the types of inline punctuations, contains incipit colons.

3. Figures

Figures are text delimited between curly brackets. The opening curly bracket must be the last character in a line and the closing curly bracket must be the first character in a line. The content of a figure is usually indented with a tab, so the first tab of each code line is removed in the final document.

Code Listing. The simplest figure is a code listing, an example of which, copied from the second edition of *“The C Programming Language”* book, is presented below.

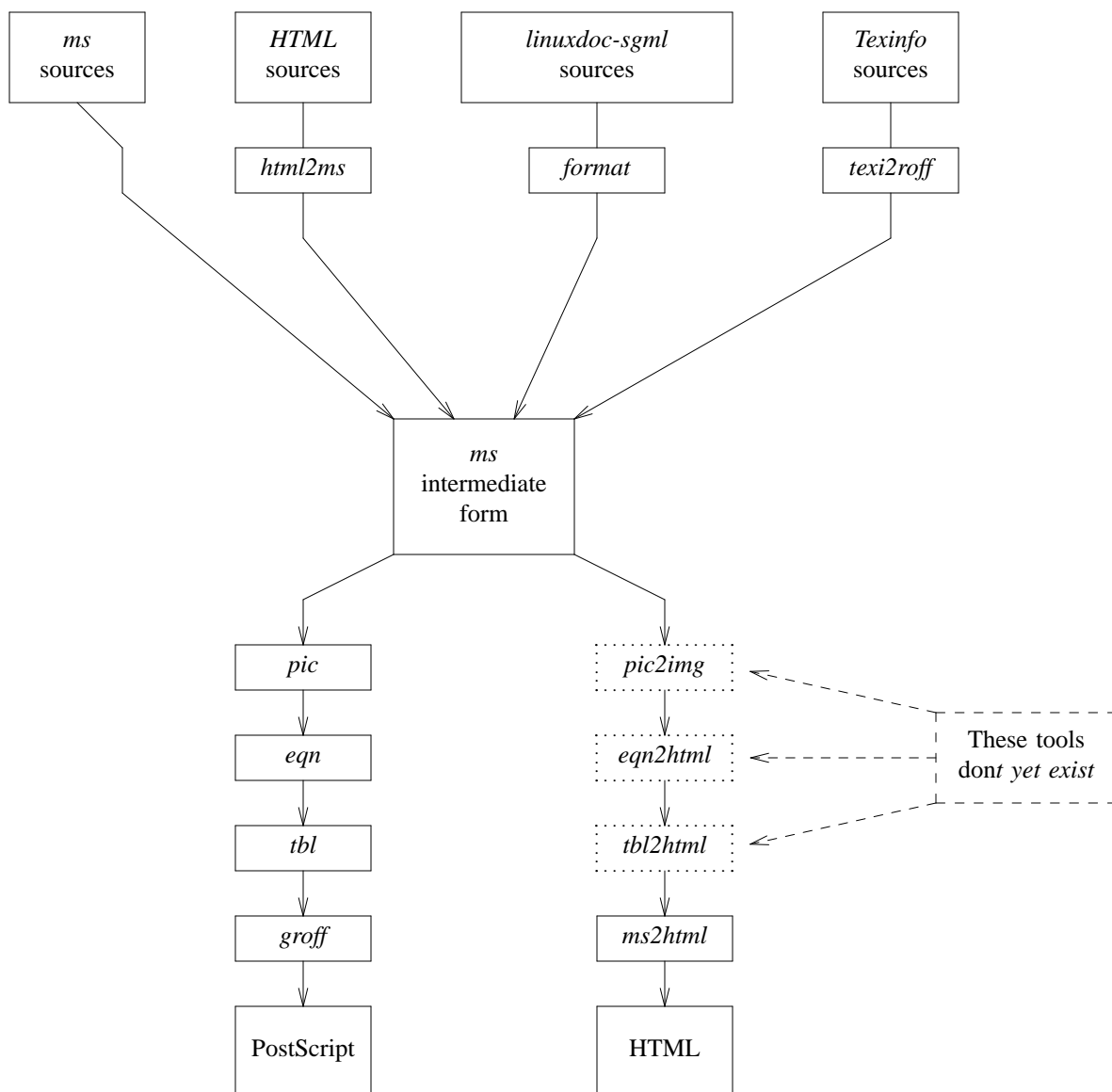
```
#include <stdio.h>

main()
{
    printf("hello, world\n");
}
```

Image. An image can be included in a figure by preceding the opening bracket with the `IMAGE:` keyword, optionally followed by the image caption, before the opening curly bracket. Note that only `.eps` images are supported when converting to troff. When converting to html, however, common formats such as `.jpg` and `.png` are supported.



PIC Diagram. When converting to ms, diagrams can be written on the PIC language. Diagrams are marked with the `PIC:` keyword before the opening curly bracket. The only punctuation that are processed inside a PIC figure are emphasis and topic (topic is converted to a emphasis between ASCII double quotes).



Tables. Tables are not supported yet.

Quotation. Quotations are not supported yet.

4. Converter

There is an *awk(1)* script (actually a shell script that calls *awk*) used for converting text from the *Incipit Markup Language* into troff (using the *-ms* macro) or html. The manual of this command is presented below.

INCIPIT(1)

General Commands Manual

INCIPIT(1)

NAME

incipit - format incipit document

SYNOPSIS

incipit [-T format] file...

DESCRIPTION

incipit converts files marked up in the Incipit Markup Language into troff using the -ms format (the default) or into html. The formatted file is written to standard output.

The options are as follows:

-T format

Convert to given format. Known formats are listed below. If not supplied, consider "ms" as default.

incipit understands the following formats:

ms Troff macros for formatting manuscripts. This is the default format.

html Hypertext Markup Language.

SEE ALSO

troff(1), ms(7)