

# The mathtools package\*

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## Abstract

The mathtools package is an extension package to amsmath. There are two things on mathtools' agenda: (1) correct various bugs/deficiencies in amsmath until these are fixed by the  $\mathcal{A}\mathcal{M}\mathcal{S}$  and (2) provide useful tools for mathematical typesetting, be it a small macro for typesetting a prescript or an underbracket, or entirely new display math constructs such as a `multlined` environment.

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## 1 Introduction

Although `amsmath` provides many handy tools for mathematical typesetting, it is nonetheless a static package. This is not a bad thing, because what it does, it mostly does quite well and having a stable math typesetting package is “a good thing.” However, `amsmath` does not fulfill all the needs of the mathematical part of the  $\text{\LaTeX}$  community, resulting in many authors writing small snippets of code for tweaking the mathematical layout. Some of these snippets have also been posted to newsgroups and mailing lists over the years, although more often than not without being released as stand-alone packages.

The `mathtools` package is exactly what its name implies: tools for mathematical typesetting. It is a collection of many of these often needed small tweaks—with some big tweaks added as well. It can only do so by having harvesting newsgroups for code and/or you writing the maintainers with wishes for code to be included, so if you have any good macros or just macros that help you when writing mathematics, then don’t hesitate to report them.

As of 2020, `mathtools` (and `empheq`) is now hosted at the  $\text{\LaTeX}$ 3 team GitHub at

<https://github.com/latex3/mathtools>

So if you have any issue, feel free to register an issue there.

Update 2013: We now make `\(\)` and `\[\]` robust (can be disabled via `nonrobust` package option).

## 2 Package loading

The `mathtools` package requires `amsmath` but is able to pass options to it as well. Thus a line like

```
\usepackage[fleqn,tbtags]{mathtools}
```

is equivalent to

```
\usepackage[fleqn,tbtags]{amsmath}
\usepackage{mathtools}
```

## 2.1 Special mathtools options

<code>fixamsmath</code>	<code>donotfixamsmathbugs</code>
-------------------------	----------------------------------

The option `fixamsmath` (default) fixes two bugs in `amsmath`.<sup>1</sup> Should you for some reason not want to fix these bugs then just add the option `donotfixamsmathbugs` (if you can do it without typos). The reason for this extremely long name is that I really don't see why you wouldn't want these bugs to be fixed, so I've made it slightly difficult not to fix them.

<code>allowspaces</code>	<code>disallowspaces</code>
--------------------------	-----------------------------

Sometimes `amsmath` gives you nasty surprises, as here where things look seemingly innocent:

```
\[
  \begin{gathered}
    [p] = 100 \\
    [v] = 200
  \end{gathered}
\]
```

Without `mathtools` this will result in this output:

$$= 100$$
$$[v] = 200$$

Yes, the `[p]` has been gobbled without any warning whatsoever.<sup>2</sup> This is hardly what you'd expect as an end user, as the desired output was probably something like this instead:

$$[p] = 100$$
$$[v] = 200$$

With the option `disallowspaces` (default) `mathtools` disallows spaces in front of optional arguments where it could possibly cause problems just as `amsmath` does with `\\` inside the display environments. This includes the environments `gathered` (and also those shown in §4.5 on page 34), `aligned`, `multlined`, and the extended `matrix`-environments (§3.4.1 on page 15). If you however want to preserve the more dangerous standard optional spaces, simply choose the option `allowspaces`.

<sup>1</sup>See the online  $\text{\LaTeX}$  bugs database <http://www.latex-project.org/cgi-bin/ltxbugs2html> under  $\mathcal{A}\mathcal{M}\mathcal{S}$ - $\text{\LaTeX}$  problem reports 3591 and 3614.

<sup>2</sup>`amsmath` thought the `[p]` was an optional argument, checked if it was `t` or `b` and when both tests failed, assumed it was a `c`.

### 3 Tools for mathematical typesetting

`\mathtoolsset{<key val list>}`

Many of the tools shown in this manual can be turned on and off by setting a switch to either true or false. In all cases it is done with the command `\mathtoolsset`. A typical use could be something like

```
\mathtoolsset{
  showonlyrefs,
  mathic % or mathic = true
}
```

More information on the keys later on.

#### 3.1 Fine-tuning mathematical layout

Sometimes you need to tweak the layout of formulas a little to get the best result and this part of the manual describes the various macros `mathtools` provides for this.

##### 3.1.1 A complement to `\smash`, `\llap`, and `\rlap`

<code>\mathllap[&lt;mathstyle&gt;]{&lt;math&gt;}</code>	<code>\mathclap[&lt;mathstyle&gt;]{&lt;math&gt;}</code>
<code>\mathrlap[&lt;mathstyle&gt;]{&lt;math&gt;}</code>	<code>\clap{&lt;text&gt;}</code>
<code>\mathmbox{&lt;math&gt;}</code>	<code>\mathmakebox[&lt;width&gt;][&lt;pos&gt;]{&lt;math&gt;}</code>

In [1], Alexander R. Perlis describes some simple yet useful macros for use in math displays. For example the display

```
\[
  X = \sum_{1\leq i\leq j\leq n} X_{ij}
\]
```

$$X = \sum_{1 \leq i \leq j \leq n} X_{ij}$$

contains a lot of excessive white space. The idea that comes to mind is to fake the width of the subscript. The command `\mathclap` puts its argument in a zero width box and centers it, so it could possibly be of use here.

```
\[
  X = \sum_{\mathclap{1\leq i\leq j\leq n}} X_{ij}
\]
```

$$X = \sum_{1 \leq i \leq j \leq n} X_{ij}$$

For an in-depth discussion of these macros I find it better to read the article; an online version can be found at

<http://www.tug.org/TUGboat/Articles/tb22-4/tb72perlS.pdf>

Note that the definitions shown in the article do not exactly match the definitions in `mathtools`. Besides providing an optional argument for specifying the desired math style, these versions also work around a most unfortunate  $\TeX$  “feature.”<sup>3</sup> The `\smash` macro is fixed too.

---

<sup>3</sup>The faulty reboxing procedure.

Posted on  
comp.text.tex  
Michael Herschorn  
1992/07/21

### 3.1.2 Forcing a cramped style

---

`\cramped[<mathstyle>]{<math>}`

Let's look at another example where we have used `\mathclap`:

```
\begin{equation}\label{eq:mathclap}
\sum_{\mathclap{a^2<b^2<c}}\quad
\sum_{a^2<b^2<c}
\end{equation}
```

$$\sum_{a^2 < b^2 < c} \sum_{a^2 < b^2 < c} \quad (1)$$

Do you see the difference? Maybe if I zoomed in a bit:

$$\sum_{a^2 < b^2 < c} \quad \sum_{a^2 < b^2 < c}$$

Notice how the limit of the right summation sign is typeset in a more compact style than the left. It is because  $\TeX$  sets the limits of operators in a *cramped* style. For each of  $\TeX$ 's four math styles (`\displaystyle`, `\textstyle`, `\scriptstyle`, and `\scriptscriptstyle`), there also exists a cramped style that doesn't raise exponents as much. Besides in the limits of operators,  $\TeX$  also automatically uses these cramped styles in radicals such as `\sqrt` and in the denominators of fractions, but unfortunately there are no primitive commands that allow you to detect crampedness or switch to it.

mathtools offers the command `\cramped` which forces a cramped style in normal un-cramped math. Additionally you can choose which of the four styles you want it in as well by specifying it as the optional argument:

$$\begin{array}{l} \backslash[ \\ \quad \backslashcramped{x^2} \qquad \qquad \qquad \backslashlefttrightharpoonup x^2 \quad \quad \backslashquad \\ \quad \backslashcramped[\scriptstyle]{x^2} \quad \backslashlefttrightharpoonup {\scriptstyle x^2} \\ \backslash] \end{array}$$

$$x^2 \leftrightarrow x^2 \quad x^2 \leftrightarrow x^2$$

You may be surprised how often the cramped style can be beneficial to your output. Take a look at this example:

```
\begin{quote}
  The 2005 Euro\TeX{} conference is held in Abbaye des
  Pr'emont'r'es, France, marking the 16th ($2^{2-2}$) anniversary
  of both Dante and GUTenberg (the German and French \TeX{} users
  group resp.).
\end{quote}
```

The 2005 EuroT<sub>E</sub>X conference is held in Abbaye des Prémontrés, France, marking the 16th (2<sup>2</sup>) anniversary of both Dante and GUTenberg (the German and French T<sub>E</sub>X users group resp.).

Typesetting on a grid is generally considered quite desirable, but as the second line of the example shows, the exponents of 2 cause the line to be too tall for the normal value of `\baselineskip`, so  $\text{\TeX}$  inserts a `\lineskip` (normal value is 1.0pt). In order to circumvent the problem, we can force a cramped style so that the exponents aren't raised as much:

```
\begin{quote}
  The 2005 Euro\TeX{} ... 16th ( $\cramped{2^{2^2}}$ ) ...
\end{quote}
```

The 2005 Euro $\text{\TeX}$  conference is held in Abbaye des Prémontrés, France, marking the 16th ( $2^{2^2}$ ) anniversary of both Dante and GUTenberg (the German and French  $\text{\TeX}$  users group resp.).

```
\crampedllap[<mathstyle>]{<math>} \crampedclap[<mathstyle>]{<math>}
\crampedrlap[<mathstyle>]{<math>}
```

The commands `\crampedllap`, `\crampedclap`, and `\crampedrlap` are identical to the three `\mathXlap` commands described earlier except the argument is typeset in cramped style. You need this in order to typeset (1) correctly while still faking the width of the limit.

```
\begin{equation*}\label{eq:mathclap-b}
  \sum_{\crampedclap{a^2<b^2<c}}
  \tag{\ref{eq:mathclap}*}
\end{equation*}
```

$$\sum_{a^2 < b^2 < c} \tag{1*}$$

Of course you could just type

```
\sum_{\mathclap{\cramped{a^2<b^2<c}}}
```

but it has one major disadvantage: In order for `\mathXlap` and `\cramped` to get the right size,  $\text{\TeX}$  has to process them four times, meaning that nesting them as shown above will cause  $\text{\TeX}$  to typeset  $4^2$  instances before choosing the right one. In this situation however, we will of course need the same style for both commands so it makes sense to combine the commands in one, thus letting  $\text{\TeX}$  make the choice only once rather than twice.

```
\begin{crampedsubarray}{<col>}<contents>\end{crampedsubarray}
\crampedsubstack{<lines separated by \>}
```

If we go back to (1) and apply `\substack`, you'll notice that the cramped style, the sum would normally apply, is now gone:

```
\[
  \sum_{\substack{a^2<b^2<c}}\quad
  \sum_{a^2<b^2<c}
\]
```



the operators were better aligned. Look closely at these examples:

```
\[
\text{a)} \lim_{n\to\infty} \max_{p\geq n} \quad
\text{b)} \lim_{n\to\infty} \max_{p^2\geq n} \quad
\text{c)} \lim_{n\to\infty} \sup_{p^2\geq nK} \quad
\text{d)} \limsup_{n\to\infty} \max_{p\geq n}
\]
```

a)  $\lim_{n\rightarrow\infty} \max_{p\geq n}$    b)  $\lim_{n\rightarrow\infty} \max_{p^2\geq n}$    c)  $\lim_{n\rightarrow\infty} \sup_{p^2\geq nK}$    d)  $\limsup_{n\rightarrow\infty} \max_{p\geq n}$

a) looks okay, but b) is not quite as good because the second limit ( $p^2 \geq n$ ) is significantly taller than the first ( $n \rightarrow \infty$ ). With c) things begin to look really bad, because the second operator has a descender while the first doesn't, and finally we have d) which looks just as bad as c). The command `\adjustlimits` is useful in these cases, as you can just put it in front of these consecutive operators and it'll make the limits line up.

```
\[
\text{a)} \adjustlimits\lim_{n\to\infty} \max_{p\geq n} \quad
\text{b)} \adjustlimits\lim_{n\to\infty} \max_{p^2\geq n} \quad
\text{c)} \adjustlimits\lim_{n\to\infty} \sup_{p^2\geq nK} \quad
\text{d)} \adjustlimits\limsup_{n\to\infty} \max_{p\geq n}
\]
```

a)  $\lim_{n\rightarrow\infty} \max_{p\geq n}$    b)  $\lim_{n\rightarrow\infty} \max_{p^2\geq n}$    c)  $\lim_{n\rightarrow\infty} \sup_{p^2\geq nK}$    d)  $\limsup_{n\rightarrow\infty} \max_{p\geq n}$

The use of `\sb` instead of `_` is allowed.

### 3.1.5 Swapping space above $\mathcal{AMS}$ display math environments

One feature that the plain old equation environment has that the  $\mathcal{AMS}$  environments do not (because of technical reasons) is the feature of using less space above the equation if the situation presents itself. The  $\mathcal{AMS}$  environments cannot do this, but one can manually, using

```
\SwapAboveDisplaySkip
```

as the very first content within an  $\mathcal{AMS}$  display math environment. It will then issue an `\abovedisplayshortskip` instead of the normal `\abovedisplayskip`.

Note it will not work with the `equation` or `multline` environments.

Here is an example of the effect

```
\noindent\rule{\textwidth}{1pt}
\begin{align*} A &= B \end{align*}
\noindent\rule{\textwidth}{1pt}
\begin{align*}
\SwapAboveDisplaySkip
A &= B
\end{align*}
```

---


$$A = B$$

---


$$A = B$$



## 3.2 Controlling tags

In this section various tools for altering the appearance of tags are shown. All of the tools here can be used at any point in the document but they should probably affect the whole document, so the preamble is the best place to issue them.

### 3.2.1 The appearance of tags

```
\newtagform{<name>}[<inner_format>]{<left>}{<right>}
\renewtagform{<name>}[<inner_format>]{<left>}{<right>}
\usetagform{<name>}
```

Altering the layout of equation numbers in amsmath is not very user friendly (it involves a macro with three @'s in its name), so mathtools provides an interface somewhat reminiscent of the page style concept. This way you can define several different tag forms and then choose the one you prefer.

As an example let's try to define a tag form which puts the equation number in square brackets. First we define a brand new tag form:

```
\newtagform{brackets}{[ ]{ }}
```

Then we activate it:

```
\usetagform{brackets}
```

The result is then

$$E \neq mc^3 \quad [2]$$

Similarly you could define a second version of the brackets that prints the equation number in bold face instead

```
\newtagform{brackets2}[\textbf]{[ ]{ }}
\usetagform{brackets2}
\begin{equation}
E \neq mc^3
\end{equation}
```

$$E \neq mc^3 \quad [3]$$

When you reference an equation with `\eqref`, the tag form in effect at the time of referencing controls the formatting, so be careful if you use different tag forms throughout your document.

If you want to renew a tag form, then use the command `\renewtagform`. Should you want to return to the standard setting then choose

```
\usetagform{default}
```

**Caveat regarding ntheorem:** If you like to change the appearance of the tags *and* you are also using the ntheorem package, then please postpone the change of appearance until *after* loading ntheorem. (In order to do its thing, ntheorem has to mess with the tags...)

### 3.2.2 Showing only referenced tags

```
showonlyrefs = true|false
showmanualtags = true|false
\refeq{<label>}
```

First of, one should always use `\eqref` when referring to equation numbers. When `showonlyrefs` is true, we monitor `\eqref{<label>}`, and those used will get an equation number, whereas those not used will not. Note: We do *not* monitor the normal `\ref` command! See the follow paragraph for situations for what to do when `\eqref` cannot be used to refer to the equation.

An equation where the tag is produced with a manual `\tag*` shouldn't be referenced with the normal `\eqref` because that would format it according to the current tag format. Using just `\ref` on the other hand may not be a good solution either as the argument of `\tag*` is always set in upright shape in the equation and you may be referencing it in italic text. In the example below, the command `\refeq` is used to avoid what could possibly lead to confusion in cases where the tag font has very different form in upright and italic shape (here we switch to Palatino in the example):

```
\begin{quote}\renewcommand*\rmdefault{ppl}\normalfont\itshape
\begin{equation*}
  a=b \label{eq:example}\tag*{Q\&A}
\end{equation*}
See \ref{eq:example} or is it better with \refeq{eq:example}?
\end{quote}
```

$a = b$

Q&A

*See **Q&A** or is it better with **Q&A**?*

Another problem sometimes faced is the need for showing the equation numbers for only those equations actually referenced. In `mathtools` this can be done by setting the key `showonlyrefs` to either true or false by using `\mathtoolsset`. You can also choose whether or not to show the manual tags specified with `\tag` or `\tag*` by setting the option `showmanualtags` to true or false.<sup>5</sup> For both keys just typing the name of it chooses true as shown in the following example.

```
\mathtoolsset{showonlyrefs,showmanualtags}
\usetagform{brackets}
\begin{gather}
  a=a \label{eq:a} \\
  b=b \label{eq:b} \tag{**}
\end{gather}
This should refer to the equation containing $a=a$: \eqref{eq:a}.
Then a switch of tag forms.
\usetagform{default}
\begin{align}
  c&=c \label{eq:c} \\
  d&=d \label{eq:d}
```

---

<sup>5</sup>I recommend setting `showmanualtags` to true, else the whole idea of using `\tag` doesn't really make sense, does it?

```

\end{align}
This should refer to the equation containing  $d=d$ : \eqref{eq:d}.
\begin{equation}
e=e
\end{equation}
Back to normal.\mathtoolsset{showonlyrefs=false}
\begin{equation}
f=f
\end{equation}

```

$$a = a \quad [4]$$

$$b = b \quad [**]$$

This should refer to the equation containing  $a = a$ : [4]. Then a switch of tag forms.

$$c = c$$

$$d = d \quad (5)$$

This should refer to the equation containing  $d = d$ : (5).

$$e = e$$

Back to normal.

$$f = f \quad (6)$$

Note that this feature only works if you use `\eqref` or `\refeq` to reference your equations.

When using `showonlyrefs` it might be useful to be able to actually add a few equation numbers without directly referring to them.

Feature request by  
Rasmus Villemoes  
2008/03/26

`\noeqref{⟨label,label,...⟩}`

The syntax is somewhat similar to `\nocite`. If a label in the list is undefined we will throw a warning in the same manner as `\ref`.

**BUG 1:** Unfortunately the use of the `showonlyref` introduces a bug within `amsmath`'s typesetting of formula versus equation number. This bug manifests itself by allowing formulas to be typeset close to or over the equation number. Currently no general fix is known, other than making sure that one's formulas are not long enough to touch the equation number.

To make a long story short, `amsmath` typesets its math environments twice, one time for measuring and one time for the actual typesetting. In the measuring part, the width of the equation number is recorded such that the formula or the equation number can be moved (if necessary) in the typesetting part. When `showonlyref` is enabled, the width of the equation number depends on whether or not this number is referred to. To determine this, we need to know the current label. But the current label is *not* known in the measuring phase. Thus the measured width is always zero (because no label equals not referred to) and therefore the typesetting phase does not take the equation number into account.

**BUG 2:** There is a bug between `showonlyrefs` and the `ntheorem` package, when the `ntheorem` option `thmmarks` is active. The shown equation numbers may come out wrong

(seems to be multiplied by 2). Or the end marker may be placed in the wrong place if a proof ends with a displayed formula, and that formula is not referred to.

There are two possible solutions to this both involving `empheq`. The easiest fix is to add the following line

```
\usepackage[overload,ntheorem]{empheq}
```

before loading `ntheorem`. But the `overload` option of course disables things like `\intertext` and `\shotintertext`.

The other thing to try is to drop the `overload` option and use `empheq` on the very last expression, as in

```
\begin{empheq}{align}
  A &= B \label{eq:32} \\
  &= 1. \label{eq:31}
\end{empheq}
\end{proof}
```

The `empheq` package fixes some problems with `ntheorem` and lets `mathtools` get correct access to the equation numbers again.

### 3.3 Extensible symbols

The number of horizontally extensible symbols in standard  $\text{\LaTeX}$  and `amsmath` is somewhat low. This part of the manual describes what `mathtools` does to help this situation.

#### 3.3.1 Arrow-like symbols

<code>\xlefttrightarrow[<math>\langle sub \rangle</math>]{<math>\langle sup \rangle</math>}</code>	<code>\xrightarrow[<math>\langle sub \rangle</math>]{<math>\langle sup \rangle</math>}</code>
<code>\xleftarrow[<math>\langle sub \rangle</math>]{<math>\langle sup \rangle</math>}</code>	<code>\xleftrightarrow[<math>\langle sub \rangle</math>]{<math>\langle sup \rangle</math>}</code>
<code>\xhookleftarrow[<math>\langle sub \rangle</math>]{<math>\langle sup \rangle</math>}</code>	<code>\xhookrightarrow[<math>\langle sub \rangle</math>]{<math>\langle sup \rangle</math>}</code>
<code>\xmapsto[<math>\langle sub \rangle</math>]{<math>\langle sup \rangle</math>}</code>	

Extensible arrows are part of `amsmath` in the form of the commands

```
\xrightarrow[ $\langle subscript \rangle$ ]{ $\langle superscript \rangle$ } and
\xleftarrow[ $\langle subscript \rangle$ ]{ $\langle superscript \rangle$ }
```

But what about extensible versions of say, `\leftrightarrow` or `\Longleftarrow`? It turns out that the above mentioned extensible arrows are the only two of their kind defined by `amsmath`, but luckily `mathtools` helps with that. The extensible arrow-like symbols in `mathtools` follow the same naming scheme as the one's in `amsmath` so to get an extensible `\Leftarrow` you simply do a

```
\[
  A \xLeftarrow[under]{over} B
\]
```

$$A \xLeftarrow[under]{over} B$$

<code>\xrightarrow[below]{above}</code>	<code>\xrightarrow[below]{above}</code>
<code>\xleftarrow[below]{above}</code>	<code>\xleftarrow[below]{above}</code>
<code>\xleftrightarrow[below]{above}</code>	<code>\xleftrightarrow[below]{above}</code>

mathtools also provides the extensible harpoons shown above. They're taken from [6]. For those liking visuals, here are the macros in use in the order listed in the two boxes above.

$A \xrightarrow[below]{above} B$	$A \xrightarrow[below]{above} B$
$A \xleftarrow[below]{above} B$	$A \xleftarrow[below]{above} B$
$A \xleftrightarrow[below]{above} B$	$A \xleftrightarrow[below]{above} B$
$A \xrightarrow[below]{above} B$	$A \xrightarrow[below]{above} B$
$A \xleftarrow[below]{above} B$	$A \xleftarrow[below]{above} B$
$A \xleftrightarrow[below]{above} B$	$A \xleftrightarrow[below]{above} B$
$A \xrightarrow[below]{above} B$	$A \xrightarrow[below]{above} B$
$A \xleftarrow[below]{above} B$	$A \xleftarrow[below]{above} B$
$A \xleftrightarrow[below]{above} B$	$A \xleftrightarrow[below]{above} B$

Change in 2020: In `\xrightarrow`, `\xleftarrow` and `\xleftrightarrow` we added a space to the argument(s), making the arrow slightly longer and moving the argument away from the large arrow head.

Feature request by  
rbrito (issue #12)  
added 2022

<code>\xrightarrow[below]{above}</code>	<code>\xrightarrow[below]{above}</code>
---	---

Similar to `\xrightarrow`/`\xleftarrow` but based on the *long* versions. For short arguments it stays the same length as the `\long . . .` base arrow.

$A \longrightarrow B$	$A \longleftarrow B$
$A \xrightarrow[b]{a} B$	$A \xleftarrow[b]{a} B$
$A \xrightarrow[below]{above} B$	$A \xleftarrow[below]{above} B$

### 3.3.2 Braces and brackets

ℒ<sub>TeX</sub> defines other kinds of extensible symbols like `\overbrace` and `\underbrace`, but sometimes you may want another symbol, say, a bracket.

<code>\underbracket[rule thickness]{bracket height}{arg}</code>
<code>\overbracket[rule thickness]{bracket height}{arg}</code>

The commands `\underbracket` and `\overbracket` are inspired by [6], although the implementation here is slightly different. Used without the optional arguments the bracket commands produce this:

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{\texttt{\$}\underbracket{foo\ bar}_{baz}\text{\texttt{\$}}} \quad \text{\texttt{foo bar}} \\ \text{\texttt{\$}\overbracket{foo\ bar}^{baz}\text{\texttt{\$}}} \quad \text{\texttt{foo bar}} \end{array}$$

The default rule thickness is equal to that of `\underbrace` (app. 5/18 ex) while the default bracket height is equal to app. 0.7 ex. These values give really pleasing results in all font sizes, but feel free to use the optional arguments. That way you may get “beauties” like

$$\begin{array}{l} \backslash[ \\ \quad \underbracket[3pt]{xxx\ yyy}_{zzz} \quad \backslashquad \text{\texttt{\textbackslash text\{and\}} \quad \backslashquad} \\ \quad \underbracket[1pt]{xxx\ yyy}_{zzz} \\ \backslash] \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{ccc} xxx\ yyy & \text{and} & xxx\ yyy \\ \underbracket{\hspace{1cm}}_{zzz} & & \underbracket{\hspace{1cm}}_{zzz} \end{array}$$

<code>\underbrace{⟨arg⟩}</code>	<code>\LaTeXunderbrace{⟨arg⟩}</code>
<code>\overbrace{⟨arg⟩}</code>	<code>\LaTeXoverbrace{⟨arg⟩}</code>

The standard implementation of the math operators `\underbrace` and `\overbrace` in  $\TeX$  has some deficiencies. For example, all lengths used internally are *fixed* and optimized for 10 pt typesetting. As a direct consequence thereof, using font sizes other than 10 will produce less than optimal results. Another unfortunate feature is the size of the braces. In the example below, notice how the math operator `\sum` places its limit compared to `\underbrace`.

$$\sum_n \underbrace{foof}_{zzz}$$

The blue lines indicate the dimensions of the math operator and the green lines the dimensions of *foof*. As you can see, there seems to be too much space between the brace and the *zzz* whereas the space between brace and *foof* is okay. Let’s see what happens when we use a bigger font size:

$$\sum_n \underbrace{foof}_{zzz}$$

Now there’s too little space between the brace and the *zzz* and also too little space between the brace and the *foof*. If you use Computer Modern you’ll actually see that the *f* overlaps with the brace! Let’s try in `\footnotesize`:

$$\sum_n \underbrace{foof}_{zzz}$$

Here the spacing above and below the brace is quite excessive.

As `\overbrace` has the exact same problems, there are good reasons for math-tools to make redefinitions of `\underbrace` and `\overbrace`. These new versions work equally well in all font sizes and fix the spacing issues and apart from working with the default Computer Modern fonts, they also work with the packages `mathpazo`, `amath`, `fourier`, `eulervm`, `cmbright`, and `mathptmx`. If you use the `ccfonts` to get the full Concrete fonts, the original version saved under the names `\LaTeXunderbrace`

and `\LaTeXoverbrace` is better, due to the special design of the Concrete extensible braces. In that case you should probably just add the lines

```
\let\underbrace\LaTeXunderbrace
\let\overbrace\LaTeXoverbrace
```

to your preamble after loading `mathtools` which will restore the original definitions of `\overbrace` and `\underbrace`.

### 3.4 New mathematical building blocks

In this part of the manual, various mathematical environments are described.

#### 3.4.1 Matrices

<pre>\begin{matrix*} [\langle col \rangle] \langle contents \rangle \end{matrix*} \begin{pmatrix*} [\langle col \rangle] \langle contents \rangle \end{pmatrix*} \begin{bmatrix*} [\langle col \rangle] \langle contents \rangle \end{bmatrix*} \begin{Bmatrix*} [\langle col \rangle] \langle contents \rangle \end{Bmatrix*} \begin{vmatrix*} [\langle col \rangle] \langle contents \rangle \end{vmatrix*} \begin{Vmatrix*} [\langle col \rangle] \langle contents \rangle \end{Vmatrix*}</pre>
--

Feature request by  
Lars Madsen  
2004/04/05

All of the `amsmath` `matrix` environments center the columns by default, which is not always what you want. Thus `mathtools` provides a starred version for each of the original environments. These starred environments take an optional argument specifying the alignment of the columns, so that

```
\[
\begin{pmatrix*}[r]
-1 & 3 \\
2 & -4
\end{pmatrix*}
\]
```

yields

$$\begin{pmatrix} -1 & 3 \\ 2 & -4 \end{pmatrix}$$

The optional argument (default is `[c]`) can be any column type valid in the usual `array` environment.

While we are at it, we also provide fenced versions of the `smallmatrix` environment. To keep up with the naming of the large matrix environments, we provide both a starred and a non-starred version. Since `smallmatrix` is defined in a different manner than the `matrix` environment, the option to say `smallmatrix*` has to be either `c`, `l` or `r`. The default is `c`, which can be changed globally using the `smallmatrix-align= $\langle c, l \text{ or } r \rangle$` .

Feature provided by  
Rasmus Villemoes  
2011/01/17

```
\begin{smallmatrix*} [\langle col \rangle] \langle contents \rangle \end{smallmatrix*}
\begin{psmallmatrix} \langle contents \rangle \end{psmallmatrix}
\begin{psmallmatrix*} [\langle col \rangle] \langle contents \rangle \end{psmallmatrix*}
\begin{bsmallmatrix} \langle contents \rangle \end{bsmallmatrix}
\begin{bsmallmatrix*} [\langle col \rangle] \langle contents \rangle \end{bsmallmatrix*}
\begin{Bsmallmatrix} \langle contents \rangle \end{Bsmallmatrix}
\begin{Bsmallmatrix*} [\langle col \rangle] \langle contents \rangle \end{Bsmallmatrix*}
\begin{vsmallmatrix} \langle contents \rangle \end{vsmallmatrix}
\begin{vsmallmatrix*} [\langle col \rangle] \langle contents \rangle \end{vsmallmatrix*}
\begin{Vsmallmatrix} \langle contents \rangle \end{Vsmallmatrix}
\begin{Vsmallmatrix*} [\langle col \rangle] \langle contents \rangle \end{Vsmallmatrix*}
smallmatrix-align = \langle c, l \text{ or } r \rangle
smallmatrix-inner-space = \,
```

```
\[
\begin{bsmallmatrix} a & -b \\ -c & d \end{bsmallmatrix}
\begin{bsmallmatrix*}[r] a & -b \\ -c & d \end{bsmallmatrix*}
\]
```

yields

$$\begin{bmatrix} a & -b \\ -c & d \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} a & -b \\ -c & d \end{bmatrix}$$

Inside the `Xsmallmatrix` construction a small space is inserted between the fences and the contents, the size of it can be changed using `smallmatrix-align=⟨some spacing command⟩`, the default is `\,`.

As an extra trick the fences will behave as open and closing fences despite their auto-scaling nature.<sup>6</sup>

### 3.4.2 The multlined environment

```
\begin{multlined} [\langle pos \rangle] [\langle width \rangle] \langle contents \rangle \end{multlined}
\shoveleft [\langle dimen \rangle] {\langle arg \rangle} \shoveright [\langle dimen \rangle] {\langle arg \rangle}
firstline-afterskip = \langle dimen \rangle lastline-preskip = \langle dimen \rangle
multlined-width = \langle dimen \rangle multlined-pos = c|b|t
```

Some of the `amsmath` environments exist in two forms: an outer and an inner environment. One example is the pair `gather` & `gathered`. There is one important omission on this list however, as there is no inner `multlined` environment, so this is where `mathtools` steps in.

One might wonder what the sensible behavior should be. We want it to be an inner environment so that it is not wider than necessary, but on the other hand we would like to be able to control the width. The current implementation of `multlined` handles both cases. The idea is this: Set the first line flush left and add a hard space after it; this space is governed by the `firstline-afterskip` key. The last line should be set flush right and preceded by a hard space of size `lastline-preskip`. Both these hard spaces have a default value of `\multlinegap`. Here we use a ‘t’ in the first optional argument denoting a top-aligned building block (the default is ‘c’).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup>`\left` and `\right` creates an *inner* construction, and not as one might expect something where a preceding `\sin` sees an opening fence, thus the space before or after may be too large. Inside this construction they behave.

<sup>7</sup>The helper macro `\Framebox{⟨...⟩}` is equivalent to `\framebox{⟨\footnotesize\strut...⟩}`



```

\[\begin{multlined}[t]
  A = \begin{multlined}[t]
        \Framebox[4cm]{first} \\\
        \Framebox[4cm]{last}
      \end{multlined} B
\end{multlined}

```

$$A = \begin{array}{c} \boxed{\text{first}} \\ \boxed{\text{last}} \end{array} B$$

Note also that `multlined` gives you access to an extended syntax for `\shoveleft` and `\shoveright` as shown in the example below.

```

\[\begin{multlined}
  \Framebox[.65\columnwidth]{First line} \\\
  \Framebox[.5\columnwidth]{Second line} \\\
  \shoveleft{L+E+F+T} \\\
  \shoveright{R+I+G+H+T} \\\
  \shoveleft[1cm]{L+E+F+T} \\\
  \shoveright[\widthof{\$R+I+G+H+T\$}]{R+I+G+H+T} \\\
  \Framebox[.65\columnwidth]{Last line}
\end{multlined}

```

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \boxed{\text{First line}} \\
 \boxed{\text{Second line}} \\
 L + E + F + T \qquad \qquad \qquad R + I + G + H + T \\
 L + E + F + T \qquad \qquad \qquad R + I + G + H + T \\
 \boxed{\text{Last line}}
 \end{array}$$

You can also choose the width yourself by specifying it as an optional argument:

```

\[\begin{multlined}[b][7cm]
  \Framebox[4cm]{first} \\\
  \Framebox[4cm]{last}
\end{multlined} = B

```

$$\begin{array}{c} \boxed{\text{first}} \\ \boxed{\text{last}} \end{array} = B$$

There can be two optional arguments (position and width) and they're interchangeable.

**Bug 1:** If used inside an array or a derivative (say, a matrix variant), `multlined` does not work as expected. The implementation contains an 'invisible' line after the first multline row, inside an array this line is no longer 'invisible' because array sets `\baselineskip` to zero. We have no general workaround for this.

Comment added  
2015/11/12

**Bug 2:** Due to the way `multlined` is implemented, certain constructions do not work inside `multlined`. We have added a hook (`\MultlinedHook`) that can be added to. The default value is a fix for `subarray` and `crampedsubarray` and thus for `\substack` and `\crampedsubstack` (and a few others, thus add to the hook, don't replace it).

This can actually be used to fix Bug 1:

```
\usepackage{mathtools,etoolbox}
\newlength\Normalbaselineskip
\setlength\Normalbaselineskip{\baselineskip}
\appto\MultlinedHook{
  \setlength\baselineskip{\Normalbaselineskip}
}
```

Comment added  
2017/05/22

**Caveat:** `\shoveleft` and `\shoveright` does not work as expected if used as the last line in `multlined`.

### 3.4.3 More cases-like environments

```
\begin{dcases} <math_column> & <math_column> \end{dcases}
\begin{dcases*} <math_column> & <text_column> \end{dcases*}
\begin{rcases} <math_column> & <math_column> \end{rcases}
\begin{rcases*} <math_column> & <text_column> \end{rcases*}
\begin{drcases} <math_column> & <math_column> \end{drcases}
\begin{drcases*} <math_column> & <text_column> \end{drcases*}
\begin{cases*} <math_column> & <text_column> \end{cases*}
```

Feature request by  
Lars Madsen  
2004/07/01

Anyone who has tried to use an integral in the regular cases environment from `amsmath` will have noticed that it is set as

$$a = \begin{cases} E = mc^2 & \text{Nothing to see here} \\ \int x - 3 dx & \text{Integral is text style} \end{cases}$$

`mathtools` provides two environments similar to `cases`. Using the `dcases` environment you get the same output as with `cases` except that the rows are set in display style.

```
\[
\begin{dcases}
  E = m c^2 & & c \approx 3.00\times 10^8\,\mathrm{m}/\mathrm{s} \\
  \int x-3\, dx & & \text{Integral is display style}
\end{dcases}
\]
```

$$\begin{cases} E = mc^2 & c \approx 3.00 \times 10^8 \text{ m/s} \\ \int x - 3 dx & \text{Integral is display style} \end{cases}$$

Additionally the environment `dcases*` acts just the same, but the second column is set in the normal roman font of the document.<sup>8</sup>

```
\[
a = \begin{dcases*}
```

---

<sup>8</sup>Or rather: it inherits the font characteristics active just before the `dcases*` environment.

$$a = \begin{cases} E = mc^2 & \text{Nothing to see here} \\ \int x - 3 \, dx & \text{Integral is display style} \end{cases}$$

```
\[
\begin{rcases*}
  x^2 & \text{for } x>0\\
  x^3 & \text{else}
\end{rcases*} \quad \rightarrow \cdots
\]
```

$$\left. \begin{array}{ll} x^2 & \text{for } x > 0 \\ x^3 & \text{else} \end{array} \right\} \Rightarrow \dots$$

Feature provided by  
Lars Madsen  
2008/06/05

In [7], Ellen Swanson recommends that whenever one has a long displayed formula, spanning several lines, and it is unfeasible to align against a relation within the first line, then all lines in the display should be aligned at the left most edge of the first line, and all subsequent lines should be indented by 2em (or if needed by a smaller amount). That is we are talking about displays that end up looking like this<sup>9</sup>

```

graph TD
    A[Long first line] --> B["= 2nd line"]
    B --> C["< ..."]
  
```

```
\begin{align*}
  \MoveEqLeft \Framebox[10cm][c]{Long first line}\\
  &= \Framebox[6cm][c]{2nd line}\\
  &\leq \dots
\end{align*}
```

<sup>9</sup>Maintainer (daleif)'s note: This is one of my most used constructions whenever I edit manuscripts. I'd rather use this than for example `multline` as I find it gives the text a more consistent look.

```

\begin{align*}
&\backslash\MoveEqLeft[3] \backslash\Framebox[10cm][c]{Part 1}\backslash\backslash
&= {} &\backslash\Framebox[8cm][c]{2nd line}\backslash\backslash
&&&+ \backslash\Framebox[4cm][c]{last part}
\end{align*}

```

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \boxed{\text{Long first line}} \\
 = \boxed{\text{2nd line}} \\
 + \boxed{\text{last part}}
 \end{array}$$

**Caveat regarding `\MoveEqLeft`:** If the first part of the equation starts with say `[a]`, `\MoveEqLeft` may attempt to eat it! You can prevent this by specifying the optional argument (remember the default is the same as `\MoveEqLeft[2]`) or by using `\MoveEqLeft{}`.

### 3.4.5 Boxing a single line in an alignment

Evolved from a request by  
 Merciadri Luca  
 2010/06/28  
 on comp.text.tex

The `amsmath` package provides the `\boxed` macro to box material in math mode. But this of course will not work if the box should cross an alignment point. We provide a macro that can.<sup>10</sup>

Reimplemented by  
 Florent Chervet (GL)  
 2011/06/11  
 on comp.text.tex

```
\Aboxed{\left hand side & right hand side}
```

Example

```

\begin{align*}
&\backslash\Aboxed{ f(x) &= \int h(x)\, dx } \backslash\backslash
&&&= g(x)
\end{align*}

```

Resulting in:

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \boxed{f(x) = \int h(x) dx} \\
 = g(x)
 \end{array}$$

One can have multiple boxes on each line, and the “& right hand side” can even be missing. Here is an example of how the padding in the box can be changed.

```

\begin{align*}
&\backslash\setlength\fbboxsep{1em}
&\backslash\Aboxed{ f(x) &= 0 } &\backslash\Aboxed{ g(x) &= b } \backslash\backslash
&\backslash\Aboxed{ h(x) } &&\backslash\Aboxed{ i(x) }
\end{align*}

```

$$\begin{array}{cc}
 \boxed{f(x) = 0} & \boxed{g(x) = b} \\
 \boxed{h(x)} & \boxed{i(x)}
 \end{array}$$

Comment by Qrrrbirlbel  
on [tex.stackexchange.com](https://tex.stackexchange.com), 2013/05/20.

Note how the `\fboxsep` change only affects the box coming immediately after it.

As \Aboxed looks for the alignment & it may be necessary to *hide* constructions like matrices that also make use of &. Just add a set of braces around the construction you want to hide.

**Tip:** At times users want a `\Aboxed` with a different type of box. To help we provide a `\Aboxed` builder:

---

`\MakeAbomedCommand\Abomedname\boxmacro`

where `\boxname` should be a macro taking a single argument. The normal `\Aboxed` is the same as `\MakeAboxedCommand\Aboxed\fbbox`. Thus you can do

$$f(x) = x^2$$

$$f(x) = x^2$$

via

```
\newcommand\myboxA[1]{\fcolorbox{gray}{yellow}{#1}}
\newcommand\myboxB[1]{\fboxsep=5pt\fboxrule=2pt\fbox{#1}}
\MakeAbboxedCommand\AbboxedA\myboxA
\MakeAbboxedCommand\AbboxedB\myboxB
\begin{align*}
\quad\quad\quad\AbboxedA{ f(x) \&= x^2 } \& \quad\quad\quad\AbboxedB{ f(x) \&= x^2 }
\end{align*}
```

### 3.4.6 Adding arrows between lines in an alignment

This first macro is a bit misleading, it is only intended to be used in combination with the `alignat(*)` environment.

Evolved from a request by  
Christian Bohr-Halling  
2004/03/31  
on dk.edb.tekst

`\ArrowBetweenLines[<symbol>]`  
`\ArrowBetweenLines*[<symbol>]`

To add, say  $\Updownarrow$  between two lines in an alignment use `\ArrowBetweenLines` and the `alignat` environment (note the extra pair of `&`'s in front):

```
\begin{alignat}{2}
&& \framebox[1.5cm]{} &= \framebox[3cm]{}\\
&& \ArrowBetweenLines % \Updownarrow is the default
&& \framebox[1.5cm]{} &= \framebox[2cm]{}
\end{alignat}
```

resulting in

$$\boxed{\phantom{0}} = \boxed{\phantom{0}} \quad (7)$$

[illegible]

Note the use of `&&` starting each *regular* line of math. For adding the arrow on the right, use `\ArrowBetweenLines*[(symbol)]`, and end each line of math with `&&`.

---

<sup>10</sup>Note that internally `\Aboxed` does use `\boxed`.

```

\begin{alignat*}{2}
\framebox[1.5cm]{} &= \framebox[3cm]{} &&\\
\ArrowBetweenLines*[\Downarrow]
\framebox[1.5cm]{} &= \framebox[2cm]{} &&
\end{alignat*}

```

resulting in

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \boxed{\phantom{000}} = \boxed{\phantom{000000}} \\
 \Downarrow \\
 \boxed{\phantom{000}} = \boxed{\phantom{0000}}
 \end{array}$$

Feature request by  
Bruno Le Floch  
(and many others)  
2011/01/25

### 3.4.7 Centered `\vdots`

If one wants to mark a vertical continuation, there is the `\vdots` command, but combine this with an alignment and we get something rather suboptimal

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \boxed{\phantom{000}} = \boxed{\phantom{000000}} \\
 \vdots \\
 = \boxed{\phantom{000000}}
 \end{array}$$

It would be nice to have (1) a `\vdots` centered within the width of another symbol, and (2) a construction similar to `\ArrowBetweenLines` that does not take up so much space. We provide both.

```

\vdotswithin{\langle symbol \rangle}
\shortvdotswithin{\langle symbol \rangle}
\shortvdotswithin*{\langle symbol \rangle}
\MTFlushSpaceAbove
\MTFlushSpaceBelow
shortvdotsadjustabove = \langle length \rangle
shortvdotsadjustbelow = \langle length \rangle

```

Two examples in one

```

\begin{align*}
a &= b && \\
&\vdotswithin{=} && \\
&= c && \\
&\shortvdotswithin{=} && \\
&= d && \\
\end{align*}

```

yielding

$$\begin{array}{c}
 a = b \\
 \vdots \\
 = c \\
 \vdots \\
 = d
 \end{array}$$

Thus `\vdotswithin{=}` creates a box corresponding to `{}= {}` and typesets a “:” centered inside it. When doing this as a normal line in an alignment leaves us with excessive space which `\shortvdotswithin{=}` takes care with for us.

The macro call `\shortvdotswithin{=}` corresponds to

```
\MTFlushSpaceAbove
& \vdotswithin{=}
\MTFlushSpaceBelow
```

whereas `\shortvdotswithin*{=}` is the case with

```
\MTFlushSpaceAbove
\vdotswithin{=} &
\MTFlushSpaceBelow
```

Note how `\MTFlushSpaceBelow` implicitly adds a `\\` at the end of the line. Thus one cannot have more on the line when using `\shortvdotswithin` or the starred version. But, if needed, one can de-construct the macro and arrive at

```
\begin{alignat*}{3}
A&+ B &&= C &&+ D \\
\MTFlushSpaceAbove
&\vdotswithin{+} &&&& \vdotswithin{+}
\MTFlushSpaceBelow
C &+ D &&= Y &&+ K
\end{alignat*}
```

yielding

$$\begin{array}{rcl} A + B & = & C + D \\ \vdots & & \vdots \\ C + D & = & Y + K \end{array}$$

If one has the need for such a construction.

The de-spaced version does support the `spreadlines` environment. The actual amount of space being *flushed* above and below can be controlled by the user using the two options indicated. Their original values are `2.15\origjot` and `\origjot` respectively (`\origjot` is usually `3pt`).

### 3.5 Intertext and short intertext

`\shortintertext{<text>}`

`amsmath` provides the command `\intertext` for interrupting a multiline display while still maintaining the alignment points. However the spacing often seems quite excessive as seen below.

```
\begin{align}
a&=b \intertext{Some text}
c&=d
\end{align}
```

$$a = b \tag{9}$$

Some text

$$c = d \tag{10}$$

Using the command `\shortintertext` alleviates this situation somewhat:

```
\begin{align}
  a&=b \shortintertext{Some text}
  c&=d
\end{align}
```

$$a = b \tag{11}$$

Some text

$$c = d \tag{12}$$

Posted on  
tex.stackexchange.com  
Tobias Weh  
(referring to a suggestion  
by Chung-chieh Shan)  
2011/05/29

It turns out that both `\shortintertext` and the original `\intertext` from `amsmath` has a slight problem. If we use the `spreadlines` (see section 4.4) to open up the equations in a multiline calculation, then this opening up value also applies to the spacing above and below the original `\shortintertext` and `\intertext`. It can be illustrated using the following example, an interested reader can apply it with and without the original `\intertext` and `\shortintertext`.

```
% the original \intertext and \shortintertext
\mathtoolssset{original-intertext,original-shortintertext}
\newcommand\myline{\par\noindent\rule{\textwidth}{1mm}}
\myline
\begin{spreadlines}{1em}
  \begin{align*}
    AA\ BB\ \intertext{\myline}
    AA\ BB\ \shortintertext{\myline}
    AA\ BB
  \end{align*}
\end{spreadlines}
\myline
```

We now fix this internally for both `\intertext` and `\shortintertext`, plus we add the possibility to fine-tune spacing around these constructions. The original versions can be brought back using the `original-x` keys below.

<pre>\intertext{&lt;text&gt;} \shortintertext{&lt;text&gt;} original-intertext = true false (default: false) original-shortintertext = true false (default: false) above-intertext-sep = &lt;dimen&gt; (default: 0pt) below-intertext-sep = &lt;dimen&gt; (default: 0pt) above-shortintertext-sep = &lt;dimen&gt; (default: 3pt) below-shortintertext-sep = &lt;dimen&gt; (default: 3pt)</pre>
--

The updated `\shortintertext` will look like the original version unless for areas with an enlarged `\jot` value (see for example the `spreadlines`, section 4.4). Whereas `\intertext` will have a slightly smaller value above and below (corresponding to



about 3pt less space above and below), the spacing around `\intertext` should now match the normal spacing going into and out of an align.

**Tip:** `\intertext` and `\shortintertext` also works within gather.

### 3.6 Paired delimiters

Feature request by  
Lars Madsen  
2004/06/25

```
\DeclarePairedDelimiter{<cmd>}{<left_delim>}{<right_delim>}
```

In the amsmath documentation it is shown how to define a few commands for typesetting the absolute value and norm. These definitions are:

```
\newcommand*\abs[1]{\lvert#1\rvert}
\newcommand*\norm[1]{\lVert#1\rVert}
```

While they produce correct horizontal spacing you have to be careful about the vertical spacing if the argument is just a little taller than usual as in

$$\left|\frac{a}{b}\right|$$

Here it won't give a nice result, so you have to manually put in either a `\left–\right` pair or a `\bigl–\bigr` pair. Both methods mean that you have to delete your `\abs` command, which may not sound like an ideal solution.

With the command `\DeclarePairedDelimiter` you can combine all these features in one easy to use command. Let's show an example:

```
\DeclarePairedDelimiter\abs{\lvert}{\rvert}
```

This defines the command `\abs` just like in the amsmath documentation but with a few additions:

- A starred variant: `\abs*` produces delimiters that are preceded by `\left` and `\right` resp.:

```
\[
\abs*{\frac{a}{b}}
\]
```

$$\left|\frac{a}{b}\right|$$

- A variant with an optional argument: `\abs[<size_cmd>]`, where `<size_cmd>` is either `\big`, `\Big`, `\bigg`, or `\Bigg` (if you have any bigger versions you can use them too).

```
\[
\abs[\Bigg]{\frac{a}{b}}
\]
```

$$\Bigg|\frac{a}{b}\Bigg|$$

```
\DeclarePairedDelimiterX{<cmd>}[<num args>]{<left_delim>}{<right_delim>}{<body>}
\delimsize
```

Sometimes one might want to have the capabilities of `\DeclarePairedDelimiter`, but also want a macro that takes more than one argument and specify plus being able to specify the body of the generated macro.

`\DeclarePairedDelimiterX` extends the features of `\DeclarePairedDelimiter` such that the user will get a macro which is fenced off at either end, plus the capability to provide the `<body>` for whatever the macro should do within these fences.

Inside the `<body>` part, the macro `\delimsize` refers to the size of the outer fences. It can then be used inside `<body>` to scale any inner fences.

Thus

```
\DeclarePairedDelimiter{<cmd>}{<left_delim>}{<right_delim>}
```

is the same thing as

```
\DeclarePairedDelimiterX{<cmd>}[1]{<left_delim>}{<right_delim>}{#1}
```

Let us do some examples. First we want to prepare a macro for inner products, with two arguments such that we can hide the character separating the arguments (a journal style might require a semi-colon, so we will save a lot of hand editing). This can be done via

```
\DeclarePairedDelimiterX\innerp[2]{\langle}{\rangle}{#1,#2}
```

More interestingly we can refer to the size inside the `<code>`. Here we do a weird three argument ‘braket’

```
\DeclarePairedDelimiterX\braket[3]{\langle}{\rangle}%
{#1\,\delimsize\vert\,\mathopen{ }#2\,\delimsize\vert\,\mathopen{ }#3}
```

*Note the use of ‘`\mathopen{ }`’ in the `<body>` of `\braket`, this is very important when a scalable delimiter is being used and it does not present itself as a left or right delimiter. You will see why it is needed if you use `\braket{A}{-B}{C}` in a version without `\mathopen{ }`.*<sup>11</sup>

Then we get

```
\[
\innerp*{A}{\frac{1}{2}} \quad
\braket[\Big]{B}{\sum_k f_k}{C}
\]
```

$$\left\langle A, \frac{1}{2} \right\rangle \quad \left\langle B \middle| \sum_k \middle| C \right\rangle$$

With the inner scaling, we can provide macros whose syntax closely follows the mathematical meaning. For building sets, try this<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup>Basically, the problem is that `\vert` is a ‘symbol’, thus `| - B` is interpreted *subtraction*, not a symbol followed by negative *B* (aka a sign). When `\mathopen{ }` is added, TeX is told that an opening delimiter just occurred, and it will adjust the minus accordingly.

<sup>12</sup>The reason for using a separate `\SetSymbol` macro has to do with complicated set definitions, where the condition spans several lines. In this case `\Set` cannot be used. Thus it is nice to be able to refer to the specific set building symbol we have decided to use in this document. Also remember to add `\allowbreak` before the proceeding inserted space. Then that space will disappear when a line break occurs.

```

% just to make sure it exists
\providecommand\given{}
% can be useful to refer to this outside \Set
\newcommand\SetSymbol[1][\]{%
  \nonscript\:#1\vert
  \allowbreak
  \nonscript\:
  \mathopen{}}
\DeclarePairedDelimiterX\Set[1]\{\}\{%
  \renewcommand\given{\SetSymbol[\delimsize]}
  #1
}

```

```
\[ \Set*{ x \in X \given \frac{\sqrt{x}}{x^2+1} > 1 } \]
```

$$\left\{ x \in X \left| \frac{\sqrt{x}}{x^2+1} > 1 \right. \right\}$$

Thus we end up with a syntax much closer to how we read this aloud. Also we hide the ‘given’ symbol for easy replacement.<sup>13</sup>

Combining with etoolbox it becomes easy to make a function that automatically provides a marker for a blank argument:

```

\usepackage{etoolbox}
\DeclarePairedDelimiterX\norm[1]\lVert\rVert{
  \ifblank{#1}\:\cdot\:{#1}
}

```

Then `\norm{}` will give you  $\|\cdot\|$  while `\norm{a}` gives the expected  $\|a\|$ .

Feature request by  
Barbara Beeton (on TSE)  
2013/10/07

```

\DeclarePairedDelimiterXPP{<cmd>}[<num args>]{<pre code>}{<left_delim>}{
  <right_delim>}{<post code>}{<body>}}

```

`\DeclarePairedDelimiterX` has an annoying caveat: it is very hard to make a macro `\lnorm{a}` that should result in  $\|a\|_2$ .<sup>14</sup>

As a consequence we provide `\DeclarePairedDelimiterXPP`.<sup>15</sup> With the addition of the `{<pre code>}` and `{<post code>}` it is identical to `\DeclarePairedDelimiterX`. It should be interpreted as

`{<pre code>}{<left_delim>}{<body>}{<right_delim>}{<post code>}`

An  $\mathcal{L}^2$  norm can now be defined as

```
\DeclarePairedDelimiterXPP\lnorm[1]{\}\lVert\rVert_{_2}{#1}
```

A probability macro with build in support for conditionals (`\given` initialized as above)

```

\DeclarePairedDelimiterXPP\Prob[1]{\mathbb{P}}{()}{\{
  \renewcommand\given{\nonscript\:\delimsize\vert\nonscript\:\mathopen{}}
  #1}

```

<sup>13</sup>The `\nonscript` construction removes the `\:` in sub- and superscript, this might not always be preferable. You can use `\mathchoice{\:}{\:}{\:}{\:}` instead of `\nonscript\:`.

<sup>14</sup>The added ‘\_2’ is hard to get around the argument parsing.

<sup>15</sup>Extended `\DeclarePairedDelimiter` with Pre and Post code.

Thus giving support for `\Prob{A \given B}`.

**Note 1:** As the number of arguments increases the `\DeclarePairedDelimiter...` macros become hard for users to understand. A key-value interface would be better. This is planned for a future release. In <http://tex.stackexchange.com/a/136767/3929> there is a suggested replacement for `\DeclarePairedDelimiter`, that greatly reduces the number of macros and provides a key-val interface. However, the code uses `xparse`, and if we want to use `xparse` for some of our macros, we might just as well rewrite the entire `mathtools` package in `expl3`. Also it is not obvious how to get `xparse` to support [3] for the number of arguments. We will consider this for a future release.

**Note 2:** If you want to define your own manual scaler macros, it is important that you besides `\foo` also define `\fool` and `\foor`. When a scaler is specified, in say `\abs[\big]{\langle arg \rangle}`, we actually use `\bigl` and `\bigr`.

### 3.6.1 Expert use

Within the starred version of `\DeclarePairedDelimiter` and `\DeclarePairedDelimiterX` we make a few changes such that the auto scaled `\left` and `\right` fences behave as opening and closing fences, i.e.  $\sin(x)$  vs.  $\sin(x)$  (the later made via `\sin\left(x\right)`), notice the gap between ‘sin’ and ‘(’. In some special cases it may be useful to be able to tinker with the behavior.

```
\reDeclarePairedDelimiterInnerWrapper{\langle macro name \rangle}%
  {\langle star or nostarnonscaled or nostarscaled \rangle}{\langle code \rangle}
```

Internally several macros are created, including three call backs that take care of the formatting. There is one internal macro for the starred version, labeled `star`, the other two are labeled `nostarnonscaled` and `nostarscaled`. Within `\langle code \rangle`, #1 will be replaced by the (scaled) left fence, #3 the corresponding (scaled) right fence, and #2 the stuff in between. For example, here is how one might turn the content into `\mathinner`:

```
\DeclarePairedDelimiter\abs\lvert\rvert
\reDeclarePairedDelimiterInnerWrapper\abs{star}{#1#2#3}
\reDeclarePairedDelimiterInnerWrapper\abs{nostarnonscaled}{\mathinner{#1#2#3}}
\reDeclarePairedDelimiterInnerWrapper\abs{nostarscaled}{\mathinner{#1#2#3}}
```

The default values for the call backs correspond to

```
star:          \mathopen{}\mathclose\bgroup #1#2\aftergroup\egroup #3
nostarnonscaled: \mathopen#1#2\mathclose#3
nostarscaled:   \mathopen{#1}#2\mathclose{#3}
```

The two `nostar...` versions look the same, but they are not. In most (math) fonts, the first item in this list will be different from the rest (the superscript sits higher).<sup>16</sup>

```
\mathclose{\rvert}^2\mathclose{\rvert}^2\rvert^2
```

**Breaking change:** Prior to May 2017, we used two wrappers, the other named `nostar`. As of May 2017 `nostar` has been split into `nostarnonscaled` and `nostarscaled` and `nostar` alone is no longer supported (will give an error).

<sup>16</sup>Interestingly it did not show up in the font of this manual, which uses the `fourier` font set.

Feature provided by  
Sebastien Gouezel  
2014/05/14

**Note:** Since we are using macros to add the `\left...\right` constructions around some body, it *is* (in principle) possible to make such a construction breakable across lines, even breakable within an `align` construction. Currently, this can only be applied to macros made using `\DeclarePairedDelimiter` and *not* macros made using `\DeclarePairedDelimiterX` or `\DeclarePairedDelimiterXPP` as the contents are typeset inside a group (to limit `\delimspace`) and thus hide any `&` or `\\` from `align` and `align` breaks down.

When `\DeclarePairedDelimiter` is used, Sebastien Gouezel has provided the following example

```
\newcommand\MTkillspecial[1]{% helper macro
\bggroup
\catcode'\&=9
\let\\relax%
\scantokens{#1}%
\egroup
}
\DeclarePairedDelimiter\abs\lvert\rvert
\reDeclarePairedDelimiterInnerWrapper\abs{star}{
\mathopen{#1\vphantom{\MTkillspecial{#2}}\kern-\nulldelimiterspace\right.}
#2
\mathclose{\left.\kern-\nulldelimiterspace\vphantom{\MTkillspecial{#2}}#3}}
```

Then this example works just fine:

```
\begin{align*}
f(a) &= \\
&\left| \begin{aligned} &\frac{1}{2} + \cdots \\ &\cdots + \frac{1}{2} \end{aligned} \right|
\end{align*}
```

$$f(a) = \left| \begin{aligned} &\frac{1}{2} + \cdots \\ &\cdots + \frac{1}{2} \end{aligned} \right|$$

## 3.7 Special symbols

This part of the manual is about special symbols. So far only one technique is covered, but more will come.

### 3.7.1 Left and right parentheses

<code>\lparen</code>	<code>\rparen</code>
----------------------	----------------------

When you want a big parenthesis or bracket in a math display you usually just type

`\left( ... \right)` or `\left[ ... \right]`

Posted on  
comp.text.tex  
Donald Arseneau  
2000/12/07

TeX also defines the macro names `\lbrack` and `\rbrack` to be shorthands for the left and right square bracket resp., but doesn't provide similar definitions for the parentheses. Some packages need command names to work with<sup>17</sup> so `mathtools` defines the commands `\lparen` and `\rparen` to represent the left and right parenthesis resp.

### 3.7.2 Vertically centered colon

<code>centercolon = true false</code> <code>\vcentcolon</code> <code>\ordinarycolon</code>
---

When trying to show assignment operations as in  $a := b$ , one quickly notices that the colon is not centered on the math axis as the equal sign, leading to an odd-looking output. The command `\vcentcolon` is a shorthand for such a vertically centered colon, and can be used as in `$a \vcentcolon= b$` and results in the desired output:  $a := b$ . See also the `colonequals` package.

Typing `\vcentcolon` every time is quite tedious, so one can use the key `centercolon` to make the colon active instead.

```
\mathtoolsset{centercolon}
\[
  a := b
\]
\mathtoolsset{centercolon=false}
```

$a := b$

In this case the command `\ordinarycolon` typesets an ... ordinary colon (what a surprise).

**Warning:** `centercolon` *does not* work with languages that make use of an active colon, most notably *French*. Sadly the `babel` package does not distinguish between text and math when it comes to active characters. Nor does it provide any hooks to deal with math. So currently no general solution exists for this problem.

<code>\coloneqq</code>	<code>\Coloneqq</code>	<code>\coloneq</code>	<code>\Coloneq</code>
<code>\eqqcolon</code>	<code>\Eqqcolon</code>	<code>\eqcolon</code>	<code>\Eqcolon</code>
<code>\colonapprox</code>	<code>\Colonapprox</code>	<code>\colonsim</code>	<code>\Colonsim</code>
<code>\dblcolon</code>			

The font packages `txfonts` and `pxfonts` provide various symbols that include a vertically centered colon but with tighter spacing. For example, the combination `:=` exists as the symbol `\coloneqq` which typesets as  $\coloneqq$  instead of  $:=$ . The primary disadvantage of using these fonts is the support packages' lack of support for `amsmath` (and thus `mathtools`) and worse yet, the side-bearings are way too tight; see [4] for examples. If you're not using these fonts, `mathtools` provides the symbols for you. Here are a few examples:

```
\[
  a \coloneqq b \quad c \Colonapprox d \quad e \dblcolon f
\]
```

$a \coloneqq b \quad c \Colonapprox d \quad e \dblcolon f$

---

<sup>17</sup>The `empheq` package needs command names for delimiters in order to make auto-scaling versions.

### 3.7.3 A few missing symbols

Most provided math font sets are missing the symbols `\nuparrow` and `\ndownarrow` (i.e. negated up- and downarrow) plus a ‘big’ version of `\times`. Therefore we will provide constructed versions of these whenever they are not already available.

```
\nuparrow
\ndownarrow
\bigtimes
```

**Note:** These symbols are constructed via features from the `graphicx` package, and thus may not display correctly in most DVI previewers. Also note that `\nuparrow` and `\ndownarrow` are constructed via `\rightarrow` and `\leftarrow` respectively, so these need to be present. Usually this is done via `amssymb`, but some packages may be incompatible with `amssymb` so the user will have to load `amssymb` or a similar package, that provides `\rightarrow` and `\leftarrow`, themselves.

With those requirements in place, we have

```
\[
\lim_{a\ndownarrow 0} f(a) \neq \bigtimes_n X_n \quad
\frac{\bigtimes_{k=1}^7 B_k \nuparrow \Omega}{2}
\]
```

$$\lim_{a \downarrow 0} f(a) \neq \bigtimes_n X_n \quad \frac{\bigtimes_{k=1}^7 B_k \uparrow \Omega}{2}$$

## 4 A tribute to Michael J. Downes

Michael J. Downes (1958–2003) was one of the major architects behind `amsmath` and member of the `TeX` Team. He made many great contributions to the `TeX` community; not only by the means of widely spread macro packages such as `amsmath` but also in the form of actively giving advice on newsgroups. Some of Michael’s macro solutions on the newsgroups never made it into publicly available macro packages although they certainly deserved it, so `mathtools` tries to rectify this matter. The macros described in this section are either straight copies or heavily inspired by his original postings.

### 4.1 Mathematics within italic text

Posted on  
`comp.text.tex`  
 Michael J. Downes  
 1998/05/14

```
mathic = true|false
```

`TeX` usually takes care of italic corrections in text, but fails when it comes to math. If you use the `TeX` inline math commands `\(` and `\)` you can however work around it by setting the key `mathic` to `true` as shown below.

```
\begin{quote}\itshape
Compare these lines: \par
\mathtoolsset{mathic} % or \mathtoolsset{mathic=true}
Subset of \((V)\) and subset of \((A)\). \par
\mathtoolsset{mathic=false}
Subset of \((V)\) and subset of \((A)\).
\par
```

`\end{quote}`

*Compare these lines:*

*Subset of V and subset of A.*

*Subset of V and subset of A.*

As of 2013, `\( \)` are robust, as are the italic corrected versions.

**Caveat:** Italic correction is a treacherous area. For example any penalties will cancel the italic correction inserted by `\(` (for an explanation see [8], section 4.3.3). We have changed Michael's original to accommodate one specific penalty construction: the *tie*, i.e., `'text~\'` will work as expected (as of July, 2014).

## 4.2 Left sub/superscripts

Posted on  
comp.text.tex  
Michael J. Downes  
2000/12/20

<code>\prescript{&lt;sup&gt;}{&lt;sub&gt;}{&lt;arg&gt;}</code>	<code>prescript-sup-format = &lt;cmd&gt;</code>
<code>prescript-sub-format = &lt;cmd&gt;</code>	<code>prescript-arg-format = &lt;cmd&gt;</code>

Sometimes one wants to put a sub- or superscript on the left of the argument. The `\prescript` command does just that:

```
\[
  {}^{4}_{12}\mathrm{C}^{5+}_{2} \quad \quad \quad \backslashquad
  \prescript{14}{2}{\mathrm{C}}^{5+}_{2} \quad \backslashquad
  \prescript{4}{12}{\mathrm{C}}^{5+}_{2} \quad \backslashquad
  \prescript{14}{}{\mathrm{C}}^{5+}_{2} \quad \backslashquad
  \prescript{}{2}{\mathrm{C}}^{5+}_{2}
\]
```

$${}^4_{12}\mathrm{C}^{5+}_2 \quad {}^{14}_2\mathrm{C}^{5+}_2 \quad {}^4_{12}\mathrm{C}^{5+}_2 \quad {}^{14}{}^{5+}_2\mathrm{C}_2 \quad {}^5+{}_2\mathrm{C}^{14}_2$$

The formatting of the arguments is controlled by three keys. This silly example shows you how to use them:

```
\newcommand*\myisotope[3]{%
  \begingroup % to keep changes local. We cannot use a brace group
    % as it affects spacing!
    \mathtoolsset{
      prescript-sup-format=\mathit,
      prescript-sub-format=\mathbf,
      prescript-arg-format=\mathrm,
    }%
  \prescript{#1}{#2}{#3}%
\endgroup
}
\[
  \myisotope{A}{Z}{X}\to \myisotope{A-4}{Z-2}{Y}+
  \myisotope{4}{2}{\alpha}
\]
```

$${}^A_Z\mathrm{X}\rightarrow {}^{A-4}_{Z-2}\mathrm{Y}+{}^4_2\alpha$$

(Though a package like mhchem might be more suitable for this type of material.)



Posted on  
comp.text.tex  
Michael J. Downes  
2002/10/17

### 4.3 Declaring math sizes

```
\DeclareMathSizes{<dimen>}{<dimen>}{<dimen>}{<dimen>}
```

If you don't know about `\DeclareMathSizes`, then skip the rest of this text. If you do know, then all that is needed to say is that with `mathtools` it is patched so that all regular dimension suffixes are now valid in the last three arguments. Thus a declaration such as

```
\DeclareMathSize{9.5dd}{9.5dd}{7.5dd}{6.5dd}
```

will now work (it doesn't in standard  $\text{\LaTeX}$ ). When this bug has been fixed in  $\text{\LaTeX}$ , this fix will be removed from `mathtools`.

The fix was added to the  $\text{\LaTeX}$  kernel in 2015. We will continue to provide it on older kernels.

Comment added  
2015/11/12

### 4.4 Spreading equations

Posted on  
comp.text.tex  
Michael J. Downes  
2002/10/17

```
\begin{spreadlines}{<dimen>}<contents>\end{spreadlines}
```

The spacing between lines in a multiline math environment such as `gather` is governed by the dimension `\jot`. The `spreadlines` environment takes one argument denoting the value of `\jot` inside the environment:

```
\begin{spreadlines}{20pt}
Large spaces between the lines.
\begin{gather}
a=b\\
c=d
\end{gather}
\end{spreadlines}
Back to normal spacing.
\begin{gather}
a=b\\
c=d
\end{gather}
```

Large spaces between the lines.

$$a = b \tag{13}$$

$$c = d \tag{14}$$

Back to normal spacing.

$$a = b \tag{15}$$

$$c = d \tag{16}$$

Posted on  
comp.text.tex  
Michael J. Downes  
2001/01/17

## 4.5 Gathered environments

```
\begin{lgathered}[\langle pos \rangle] \langle contents \rangle \end{lgathered}
\begin{rgathered}[\langle pos \rangle] \langle contents \rangle \end{rgathered}
\newgathered{\langle name \rangle}{\langle pre_line \rangle}{\langle post_line \rangle}{\langle after \rangle}
\renewgathered{\langle name \rangle}{\langle pre_line \rangle}{\langle post_line \rangle}{\langle after \rangle}
```

In a document set in fleqn, you might sometimes want an inner gathered environment that doesn't center its lines but puts them flush left. The lgathered environment works just like the standard gathered except that it flushes its contents left:

```
\begin{equation}
  \begin{lgathered}
    x=1,\quad x+1=2 \quad \\
    y=2
  \end{lgathered}
\end{equation}
```

$$\begin{array}{l} x = 1, \quad x + 1 = 2 \\ y = 2 \end{array} \quad (17)$$

Similarly the rgathered puts its contents flush right.

More interesting is probably the command \newgathered. In this example we define a gathered version that centers the lines and also prints a star and a number at the left of each line.

```
\newcounter{steplinecnt}
\newcommand\stepline{\stepcounter{steplinecnt}\thesteplinecnt}
\newgathered{stargathered}
  {\llap{\stepline}$*$\quad\hfil}% \hfil for centering
  {\hfil}% \hfil for centering
  {\setcounter{steplinecnt}{0}}% reset counter
```

With these definitions we can get something like this:

```
\begin{gather}
  \begin{stargathered}
    x=1,\quad x+1=2 \quad \\
    y=2
  \end{stargathered}
\end{gather}
```

$$\begin{array}{l} 1* \quad x = 1, \quad x + 1 = 2 \\ 2* \quad y = 2 \end{array} \quad (18)$$

\renewgathered renews a gathered environment of course.

In all fairness it should be stated that the original concept by Michael has been extended quite a bit in mathtools. Only the end product of lgathered is the same.

## 4.6 Split fractions

Posted on  
comp.text.tex  
Michael J. Downes  
2001/12/06

```
\splitfrac{\langle start line \rangle}{\langle continuation \rangle}
\splittedfrac{\langle start line \rangle}{\langle continuation \rangle}
```

These commands provide split fractions e.g., multiline fractions:

```

\[
a=\frac{
\splitfrac{xy + xy + xy + xy + xy}
{+ xy + xy + xy + xy}
}{z}
=\frac{
\splitdfrac{xy + xy + xy + xy + xy}
{+ xy + xy + xy + xy}
}{z}
\]

```

$$a = \frac{\frac{xy+xy+xy+xy+xy}{+xy+xy+xy+xy}}{z} = \frac{\frac{xy+xy+xy+xy+xy}{+xy+xy+xy+xy}}{z}$$

The difference between `\splitfrac` and `\splitdfrac` is that the former forces its arguments to be typeset in text-mode math, the latter does not.

**Note:** If you try to nest `\splitfrac` inside each other you may need to add `\mathstrut` to the first argument of the nested fraction to get the spacing look even. It is not added by default as often a more cramped look is desired:

```

\[
\frac{
\splitfrac{xy + xy + xy + xy + xy}
{
\splitfrac{xy + xy + xy + xy + xy}
{+ xy + xy + xy + xy}
}
}{z}
=\frac{
\splitfrac{xy + xy + xy + xy + xy}
{
\splitfrac{\mathstrut xy + xy + xy + xy + xy}
{+ xy + xy + xy + xy}
}
}{z}
\]

```

$$\frac{\frac{\frac{xy+xy+xy+xy+xy}{\frac{xy+xy+xy+xy+xy}{+xy+xy+xy+xy}}}{z}}{\frac{\frac{xy+xy+xy+xy+xy}{\frac{xy+xy+xy+xy+xy}{+xy+xy+xy+xy}}}{z}}$$

Note how the line spaces aren't even on the left hand side.

For even more control, one can use `aligned` or `gathered` instead of `\splitfrac`.

## 5 New additions

### 5.1 Variable math strut

`\xmathstrut[⟨depth increase⟩]{⟨increase⟩}`

In typography we use *struts* to ensure specific line spacing. In text we have the `\strut` and in math `\mathstrut`. Both have no width, but equal the height and depth of an »(« from the current text/math font and size. In math we often need to make minute adjustments in macro definitions etc. The *extended* math strut `\xmathstrut` allows to *increase* (decrease if negative) the math strut in two ways.

For an *⟨increase⟩* (a decimal number), say 0.1,

$$\xmathstrut{0.1}$$

will give you a new strut where 10% of the *total height of the normal math strut* (`\mathstrut=\xmathstrut{0}`) will be added to both *the height* and *the depth* of the original strut (thus 20% gets added in total). On the other hand

$$\xmathstrut[0.2]{0.1}$$

will result in a strut where 20% is added to the depth and 10% is added to the height, resulting in a strut that is 30% larger than normal.

The following example is inspired (with permission) from an example showcasing `\xmathstrut` in the upcoming third edition of *The LaTeX Companion*. The example is very relevant as the entries of the cases (\*) environment are typeset in *text style* math and thus may end up looking quite squished.<sup>18</sup>

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{ll} \frac{\frac{x-1}{x-\sin x}}{\sqrt{1-x}} & x > 0 \\ 0 & \text{otherwise} \end{array} \right. \quad \text{vs.} \quad \left\{ \begin{array}{ll} \frac{\frac{x-1}{x-\sin x}}{\sqrt{1-x}} & x > 0 \\ 0 & \text{otherwise} \end{array} \right.$$

```
\[ \begin{cases*}
  \frac{ \frac{ x-1 }{ x-\sin x } }{ \sqrt{ 1-x } } & \& \$x>0\$ \\
  0 & \& \text{otherwise}
\end{cases*}
\qqquad \text{vs.} \qqquad
\begin{cases*}
  \frac{ \frac{ \xmathstrut{0.1} x-1 }{ \xmathstrut{0.25} x-\sin x } }{ \xmathstrut{0.4} \sqrt{ 1-x } } & \& \$x>0\$ \\
  0 & \& \text{otherwise}
\end{cases*} \]
```

To showcase the optional argument, it is probably easiest to make the strut visible. Here you'll see that `\mathstrut` and `\xmathstrut{0}` is the same:

$$\text{---} \overline{a \mathstrut a} \text{---}$$

---

<sup>18</sup>Which is why Frank suggested the macro (including its implementation) in the first place.

```

\newcommand\vfbb[1]{\begingroup\fbboxsep=0pt\boxed{\,\#1\,}\endgroup}
\[
a
\vfbb{ \mathstrut }           \ \  \ % normal strut
\vfbb{ \xmathstrut{0} }      \ \  \ % just 0 => normal strut
\vfbb{ \xmathstrut{0.5} }    \ \  \ % twice as large 50% + 50%
\vfbb{ \xmathstrut{-0.1} }   \ \  \ % negative gives something smaller
\vfbb{ \xmathstrut[0.5]{0} } \ \  \ % change only the depth
a
\]

```

– the last box showcases a strut where we have only changed the depth of the strut. One can see `\xmathstrut[0.5]{0}` kind of the opposite of `\smash[b]{...}`, the former makes the depth larger and the latter ignores the depth.

## References

- [1] Alexander R. Perlis, *A complement to \smash, \llap, and \rlap*, TUGboat 22(4) (2001). Available at <https://www.tug.org/TUGboat/tb22-4/tb72perlS.pdf>.
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