

Resources

Users' Guide to LaTeX-help

Max Hailperin

All sites with LATEX should have one or more LATEX experts to help users. Those experts communicate with each other about difficult problems through various forums, including the TeXhax mailing list.

Lately, many sites have installed LATEX without having, acquiring, or developing a LATEX expert. Many simple LATEX questions from those sites have been posted directly to TeXhax, clogging it and prompting redundant replies.

Therefore, a number of TeXhax subscribers have formed a volunteer LATEX question answering corps. LATEX users with questions should take the following steps:

numbered

- Read the manual very carefully, including a careful check of the index. Most questions are answered there.
- Check whether anyone locally can answer your question. Consider not only paid systems staff but also more experienced users. Similarly, if you paid a commercial company good money for LATEX, you should demand customer support from them—after all LATEX is available for free.
- See if you can work it out yourself, and in the process build LATEX expertise, by use of careful test cases, tracing mode, examining the LATEX source files, etc. Don't go crazy if you're a non-programmer, but give it a shot.
- If all of the above fail, don't send mail to TeXhax. Instead, send mail to

LaTeX-help@sumex-aim.Stanford.EDU.

Your mail will automatically be forwarded to a member of the volunteer corps, in a round-robin rotation. You should hear back shortly, either with a solution to your problem, a request for additional information, or the remark that it exceeded the volunteer's abilities and has been forwarded to other experts, including further volunteers and the TeXhax mailing list. If you don't hear anything after waiting a reasonable period, write to

LaTeX-help-coordinator@sumex-aim.Stanford.EDU

with as much information about your original

mailing as you have, and the coordinator will try to track down how it got lost.

Please do not abuse this service. We volunteers have lots of work of our own to do, and will not continue volunteering if the burden is excessive. Make sure you try steps 1-3 before step 4, and always be eager to help others locally who are a step behind you. Also, join TUG (the TeX Users Group) if you haven't and avail yourself of their classes and publications to develop in-house LATEX expertise.

If you have any questions or comments on this, please write to

LaTeX-help-coordinator@sumex-aim.Stanford.EDU

not directly to the current person holding that position, as it may change.

Editor's note: Additional volunteers for this project are welcome. Anyone who wishes to lend a hand should get in touch with the coordinator.

◊ Max Hailperin
Stanford Knowledge Systems
Laboratory
701 Welch Rd., Bldg. C
Palo Alto, CA 94304
mxh@sumex-aim.Stanford.EDU

TeX-Ed

Yin Kean

At the TeX User's Group 10th Anniversary Conference (September 1989), many attendees expressed similar concerns on the courses that are currently being offered by the TeX User's Group. In general, it was believed that the TeX user community is evolving and that training materials and courses need to be developed for the changing nature of the TeX user community. As a result, several proposals were drawn-up and discussed at the conference. To continue discussing and refining the proposals, TeX-Ed, a listserv mailing list has been created at the University of Illinois at Chicago. TeX-Ed will also serve as a forum on all educational aspects of TeX in general, and teaching materials such as templates, macros, etc. will also be obtainable from TeX-Ed archives. The teaching materials may