

# The `testhyphens` package

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## Abstract

This small file implements some code that was already published on TUGboat, but it is adapted to L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X and it is enriched with other commands. It helps those who create hyphenation patterns, as well normal L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X users, to test the correctness of the hyphenations of words lists. It works also with `xelatex`.

## 1 Introduction

This small package introduces the declaration `\testhyphens` and the environment `checkhyphens`. The declaration, to be used within a group where the hyphenation parameters may be optionally set to any specific value, and process a list of one or more space delimited words typesetting the one per line with hyphens between every syllable.

The language, its hyphenation rules that are to be checked, may be the default language before entering the group, or can be a language specified with `\selectlanguage` within the group before activating the declaration: this declaration could be set within a `\foreignlanguage{<language>}` argument or within the body of an `otherlanguage` environment.

The environment `checkhyphens` accepts an optional argument to set the hyphenation parameters, and a body consisting of a list of one or more words; again words are separated by spaces, and if the user just pastes a text copied from somewhere that included punctuation, the punctuation signs are ignored, but are not taken off from the text.

The main code was published long ago by Victor Eijkout, in “The bag of tricks”, *TUGboat* 14.4 (1993), p. 424. He himself states that that code was created by Jonathan Kew; Victor Eijkout just added an empty `\discretionary{}{}{}`; the idea came to him from the code created by Oliver Schoett that is used for the hyphenation exception list of TUGboat. Credit for the code goes completely to the persons mentioned above; I just added some sugar to use that code in L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X documents for the benefit of hyphenation pattern creators, and of regular users

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who want to know how a certain word or the words of a certain sentence would be hyphenated by  $\text{\TeX}$  and friends.

Of course this package does not tell the whole truth: in fact  $\text{\TeX}$  and friends hyphenate words only when certain conditions are met; these conditions are stated in Appendix H of the  $\text{\TeX}$ book, which is and remains the primary reference for understanding the hyphenation process used by  $\text{\TeX}$  and friends.

Sometimes the user complains that certain words are not hyphenated; the user might use this package and find out that her/his words are regularly hyphenated; then what's happening? Simply those conditions are not met. Therefore the full understanding of the above mentioned Appendix H is fundamental before complaining about  $\text{\TeX}$  not working properly with hyphenations and possibly before raising a bug notice.

## 2 Usage

This package has been tested with `pdf $\text{\LaTeX}$`  and `x $\text{\LaTeX}$` ; it should work also with `l $\text{\LaTeX}$`  but it was not tested with this engine.

Remember that Normal Plain  $\text{\TeX}$  and  $\text{\LaTeX}$  have available the command `\showhyphens` but, differently from this package, that command works only when the typesetting engine is `tex` or `pdf $\text{\LaTeX}$`  and the result appears on the console window and in the `.log` file – no written record remains available to the user; for `x $\text{\LaTeX}$`  there was a workaround provided by another package, but for some reasons it did not work in every circumstance. This package prints the result in the output document and works also with `x $\text{\LaTeX}$` .

This simple package is loaded simply with the usual statement

```
\usepackage{testhyphens}
```

The package defines for the end user one declaration `\testhyphens` and one environment `checkhyphens` the syntax of which is the following:

```
\begin{checkhyphens}[\langle hyphenation parameters \rangle]
\{\langle word list \rangle\}
\end{checklist}
```

where  *$\langle hyphenation parameters \rangle$*  is a *colon separated list* of two decimal digits that in order will be assigned by the environment respectively to `\lefthyphenmin` and `\righthyphenmin`, and  *$\langle word list \rangle$*  is self explanatory. Nevertheless it good to remember that the environment isolates single words by using a space as a word separator; this requires that the list is preceded and followed by spaces; setting the environment with the opening and closing statements on single lines, as shown above, is sufficient, while a source line such as `\begin{checkhyphens}[\langle hyphenation parameters \rangle]\{\langle word list \rangle\}\end{checklist}` might not produce the desired result.

### 3 Using hyphenation parameters

The hyphenation parameters are just `\lefthyphenmin` and `\righthyphenmin`; they represent the minimum number of characters that the first and, respectively, the last word fragment must have before or until hyphenation takes place; in English the default values are 2 and 3; in Italian the default values are 2 and 2; in Greek the default values are 1 and 1.

Let us make an example: the word *idea* is spelt the same in English and Italian, although it is pronounced differently; but in both cases the word is not hyphenated at all in both languages. According to the Italian hyphenation rules its grammatical hyphenation is *i-de-a*; in English possibly the grammatical hyphenation is the same; in any case the initial and the terminal syllables are too short to comply with the above mentioned T<sub>E</sub>X hyphenation parameters, and T<sub>E</sub>X refrains from hyphenating this word. In Greek, on the opposite, ιδέα it is divided into ι-δέ-α.

If you use `checkhyphens` with the optional hyphenation parameters specified to 1 and 1 in Italian or in English, as in

```
checkhyphens[1:1]{idea}
```

you don't get any useful result in English, and the word remains un-hyphenated; but in Italian it turns out to be *i-de-a* as in Greek.

This happens because the Italian patterns were created by hand and tested with parameters 1 and 1, even if for typesetting purposes the parameters are set to 2 and 2. In English the patterns were created by means of the program `patgen` where parameters 2 and 3 were set. Typographically speaking the values 1 and 1 for Italian are almost useless, but in certain difficult narrow-measure texts the user has the possibility to locally set the first and/or the second parameter to 1, and solve that particular instance of problematic narrow-measure typesetting.

### 4 Examples

Here we show some actual examples using either the declaration or the environment. While typesetting in English we might verify the hyphenation of some words. We set in the source file the following lines (notice the `\par` command is a reminder that the group containing the declaration must be used in vertical mode; a blank line would be equivalent):

```
\par
{\testhyphens
manifests instruments
he analyses the samples and submits the analyses to the federal office
}
```

The result produced by this package is:

```
man-i-fests
in-stru-ments
he
```

anal-y-ses  
the  
sam-ples  
and  
sub-mits  
the  
anal-y-ses  
to  
the  
fed-eral  
of-fice

Notice the two instances of the word **analyses**;  $\TeX$  hyphenates them the same way in English, but one of the two is hyphenated in a wrong way; unfortunately there is no way for  $\TeX$  to distinguish homographic words that are not homophonic ones. In plain terms the verb “analyses” is stressed on the ‘y’, while the noun “analyses” is stressed on the second ‘a’; the standard phonetic hyphenation rules for English probably should hyphenate the verb as “an-a-lyses”, but  $\TeX$  works only on the spelling and not on the sound and does not make any logical analysis of the text to find out if a word plays the rôle of a noun or of a verb. In this and similar situations (for example: “the record” and “to record”) the user should check a good reliable dictionary and possibly use an explicit discretionary hyphen  $\text{\-}$ .

While typesetting in Italian it is possible to insert in the source file a set of lines such as these:

```
\begin{checkhyphens}
ebbe la bell'idea di viaggiare in scooter
\end{checkhyphens}
```

that produces the following result:

eb-be  
la  
bel-l'i-dea  
di  
viag-gia-re  
in  
scoo-ter

Notice that “idea” cannot be hyphenated by  $\TeX$  when it is an isolated word; but in Italian the apostrophe is used (also) to mark a vocalic elision, therefore for hyphenation purposes, even if it is not a letter, it is assigned a lowercase code, and it legally becomes part of a word, in our case the word “bell’idea”. Therefore the patterns that involve the apostrophe produce the result shown above, where the first grammatical hyphen shows up again.

While typesetting in Greek we might insert in the source file the following code:

```
\begin{checkhyphens}
επεξεργάζεται αρχεία τα οποία περιέχουν τους χαρακτήρες που
υπάρχουν στο πληκτρολόγιο του υπολογιστή σας
\end{checkhyphens}
```

and we would get:

ε-πε-ξερ-γάζε-ται  
αρ-χε-ία  
τα  
ο-πο-ία  
πε-ρι-έχουν  
τους  
χα-ρα-κτήρες  
που  
υ-πάρ-χουν  
στο  
πλη-κτρο-λόγιο  
του  
υ-πο-λο-γι-στή  
σας

while, had we set the hyphenation parameters different from the default values 1 and 1, as in:

```
\begin{checkhyphens}[2:2]  
επεξεργάζεται αρχεία τα οποία περιέχουν τους χαρακτήρες που  
υπάρχουν στο πληκτρολόγιο του υπολογιστή σας  
\end{checkhyphens}
```

the result would be

επε-ξερ-γάζε-ται  
αρ-χε-ία  
τα  
οπο-ία  
πε-ρι-έχουν  
τους  
χα-ρα-κτήρες  
που  
υπάρ-χουν  
στο  
πλη-κτρο-λόγιο  
του  
υπο-λο-γι-στή  
σας

Notice that as things are at the moment of writing this documentations, the monotonic Greek hyphenation Patterns fail to hyphenate after an accented vowel followed by a consonant; the grammar allows to hyphenate in that position; but it correctly recognises the hiatus between an unaccented vowel and an accented one; at the same time the first Greek example shows very clearly the effect of `\lefthyphenmin=1` compared to the second example where `\lathyphenmin=2`. On the other hand, missing some hyphen points is certainly a feature that precludes full hyphenation, but it does not produce hyphenation errors.

## 5 The code

The following code has very few modifications compared to the original code published by Victor Eijkhout. For my own benefit I changed the declaration name from `\printhypens` to `\t@sthyphens`; with an at-sign internal name it is less likely that the declaration is redefined by a user. I also moved the command `\offinterlineskip` from its penultimate position in the original code to the first command to be executed within the `\vbox`; in this way I avoided certain cases in which the lack of interline skip would remain active after the environment closure.

The code is based on treating the interword space as an active character that plays different rôles according to its position; it lets the declaration isolate the words to be hyphenated and open suitable boxes, that are closed at the moment of processing the following word; the `\everypar` token list distinguishes the various actions to be performed at each step.

But the trick is to set each word within a vertical box where the measure (the text width `\hsize` is zero; in this way each word is hyphenated at the first hyphen point, but the word fragment that remains in the following line is still too long and gets hyphenated again; the process is repeated again and again until the initial string is exhausted. The contents of the `\vbox`, that now contains the syllables one per line, is reassembled to form one line, and this line is output within an `\hbox` and is therefore the box typeset in vertical mode; this is why the declaration must be issued in vertical mode, so as to start processing the word list with the right foot; this is also why the word list must start and end with spaces; the first one before the first word opens the first box, and the last space after the last word closes and outputs the last box.

```

1 \def\t@sthyphens{\everypar{\setbox0\lastbox \setbox1\hbox{\strut}\vbox\bgroup
2 \offinterlineskip
3 \everypar{\setbox0\lastbox \nobreak\hskip\z@}\dimen0=\hsize
4 \hsize=\z@ \hfuzz\maxdimen \def\par{\endgraf \hsize=\dimen0\getlastline
5 \egroup\endgraf}}\breakafterword}
6
7 \def\breakafterword{\catcode'\^M\active\catcode'\ \active}
8
9 {\breakafterword\gdef^M{\par}\global\let ^M}
10
11 \def\getlastline{\setbox0\lastbox\ifvoid0\let\next\nomorelines
12 \else\unskip\unpenalty\setbox1\hbox{\unhbox0\strut\discretionary{}{}{}%
13 \unhbox1}\let\next\getlastline\fi\next}
14
15 \def\nomorelines{\unhbox1}

```

The above code is substantially the original one; now we define the user declaration control sequence `\testhyphens` by letting it to assume the meaning of the internal control sequence. Then we define the `checkhyphens` environment where we make sure that the whole process of the word list contained in its body takes place in vertical mode. In order to process the optional argument for setting the hyphenation parameters, we define a delimited argument macro `\s@thyphenpars`

that uses the *colon* as argument delimiter.

```
16 \let\testhyphens\t@sthyphens
17
18 \newenvironment{checkhyphens}[1][\lefthyphenmin:\righthyphenmin]{%
19 \@tempcnta=\lefthyphenmin
20 \@tempcntb=\righthyphenmin
21 \s@thyphenpars[#1]\par\bgroup\t@sthyphens
22 }{%
23 \egroup\par
24 }
25
26 \def\s@thyphenpars[#1:#2]{%
27 \@tempcnta=#1\relax
28 \@tempcntb=#2\relax
29 \unless\ifnum\@tempcnta=\lefthyphenmin \lefthyphenmin=\@tempcnta\fi
30 \unless\ifnum\@tempcntb=\righthyphenmin \righthyphenmin=\@tempcntb\fi
31 }
```

That's all. Happy T<sub>E</sub>Xing.