Getting started with LaTeX

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This document details some options in getting started with the use of Latex in your assignments.

1 Cross - platform use (online)

Probably the best way to get started with LaTeX is to make a free account at `www.overleaf.com` and start messing around with one of the free templates available. The advantage is that this Latex IDE is online and browser based; so regardless of what machine you are using, as long as you can run Google Chrome, you have a LaTeX editor and compiler with you. Moreover, all your files stay in the cloud and is directly available through Overleaf.

2 Platform dependent use (locally)

If you do not have access to internet and need to run a Latex editor and compiler locally then you have several software to choose from. However, you must first pick a LaTeX distribution before you choose your specific IDE.

2.1 Distributions

1. MikTeX is a popular latex distribution used by many people. If you are on Windows I was would suggest you use this LaTeX distribution since it is more Windows oriented.

2. TeX Live is another distribution more popular with UNIX based OS uers. They also have a separate MacOSX distribution for Mac users. On Linux systems TexLive is also probably installable using the package manager (`apt-get, yum`, etc).

You can find some comments on the differences between the distributions here.

2.2 Editors

1. TeXstudio is my editor of choice. It works on MacOS, Linux and Windows and is highly customizable to your liking (it can therefore, also be that much harder to get it up and running the first time around). If you are on Windows then proTeXt will install TeXstudio on top of MiKTex for you.

2. TexMaker is another highly popular tool for editing and compiling LaTeXfiles.

3. For Mac users TexPad is a highly polished (but not free) application for editing and compiling LaTeX files. It also works on iOS devices.

4. There are also editors like TeXmacs and TeXworks which, unlike the above, I have personally not used ... and hence cannot comment.

Of course, for the truly ambitious you ***can*** use `vim` or `nano` to edit LaTeX files and then proceed with CLI commands `pdflatex`, `xelatex` etc. to do everything solely from the terminal. But I wouldn't recommend this route for most people.

3 Getting help

- For Overleaf, their tutorial section has a pretty comprehensive introduction - both to the use of the website and to LaTeX itself.

- For a general and detailed introduction the entry at Wikibooks is pretty thorough.

Apart from this, good old Google has saved me from hours of frustration multiple times and StackExchange for LaTeX also has come in handy couple of times.