

Differences between \LaTeX and other typesetting programs

Most word processors these days have the feature that what you see as you type is almost exactly the same as what you get when you print. A standard acronym for this is WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get). Microsoft Word, FrontPage, Dreamweaver, and other editors work this way.

In the case of Word, besides the text that you type, additional codes are inserted into the document to indicate where the font size should change, whether to use bold, italic, or regular type, etc. You can only edit your document using Word, since these additional characters are encoded with non-text characters and their format is not known to the average user.

With FrontPage and other HTML editors, you can either edit the document as you would see it on a web browser (with bold and various size fonts) or you can edit the HTML source, which has additional “tags” which indicate changes in the appearance of the text.

With \LaTeX , the document is simply a text file (people use the extension .tex for these “source files”) that you can edit with a text editor like Notepad. Then you run the \LaTeX program to turn the source of the document into a .dvi file (DeVice Independent) or a .pdf file (Portable Document Format), which can be viewed with a previewer.