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## Shorter space after ellipsis

MWE

In this sentence the space after the ellipsis . . . seems noticeably shorter than the space before it.

Is this true? expected? typographically correct? If it should be fixed, how? I've browsed related questions but found no answers.

```
\documentclass[10pt]{article}

\usepackage[text={2.1in,4in}]{geometry}

\usepackage{microtype} % since it's in my document

\begin{document}

In this sentence the space after the ellipsis \dots seems
noticeably shorter than the space before it.

\end{document}

{ellipsis}
```

asked Oct 10 '15 at 18:34

 [Ethan Bolker](#)  
5,262 2 16 41

2 there's no space after `\dots` because spaces after a control sequence are ignored (except as needed to recognize the end of the control sequence). the usual recommendation is to insert a "slash space" after `\dots\`  to get an ordinary (as opposed to end-of-sentence) space. - [barbara beeton](#) Oct 10 '15 at 18:39

@barbarabeeton That explains why it happens. I'll go with the explicit `\`  since it's not needed often in my document. But `\dots\`  should deal with the typographic question automatically. If you post as an answer I'll accept so the question won't stay unanswered. - [Ethan Bolker](#) Oct 10 '15 at 21:10

## 2 Answers

[barbara's answer](#) explains why this happens and offers some advice on how to address it. I have to say, I'm pretty sure I'm wildly inconsistent about how I handle this.

Here's a comparison:

```

\documentclass{article}

\begin{document}
Some words \dots after the beginning.

Some words \textellipsis after the beginning.

Some words \dots\ after the beginning.

Some words \textellipsis\ after the beginning.
\end{document}

```

produces:

Some words ... after the beginning.  
Some words ... after the beginning.  
Some words ... after the beginning.  
Some words ... after the beginning.

While the lack of space in the first two cases looks odd, the second two don't look quite right to me either because the space *after* the ellipsis now *exceeds* that before it.

As I understand it, this is because space equal to that between the dots is added after the final dot to ensure that any following punctuation is correctly spaced:

```

Do you know some words \dots?

Do you know some words \textellipsis?

```

produces:

**spaced punctuation**

which seems reasonable. When \ is added after the ellipsis, the additional space is added to the space already there.

If you want even spacing around the ellipsis, the `ellipsis` package offers a solution:

```

\documentclass{article}
\usepackage{ellipsis}
\begin{document}

Some words \dots\ after the beginning.

Some words \textellipsis\ after the beginning.

Do you know some words \dots?

Do you know some words \textellipsis?
\end{document}

```

produces balanced spacing in both kinds of case:

Some words ... after the beginning.  
Some words ... after the beginning.  
Do you know some words ...?  
Do you know some words ...?

But if, like me, you are horribly inconsistent about this, you might hope the package would solve the problem automatically.

According to the documentation, you should be able to do just this using the option `xspace`. In that case, you are supposed to be able to type `\dots whatever` and have everything work. However, when I try that, the spacing after the ellipsis is again larger than that before it, although the effect is less pronounced than without the package.

That is,

```
\documentclass{article}
\usepackage[xspace]{ellipsis}
\begin{document}
```

Some words `\dots` after the beginning.

Some words `\textellipsis` after the beginning.

Some words `\dots` after the beginning.

Some words `\textellipsis` after the beginning.

Do you know some words `\dots`?

```
Do you know some words \textellipsis?
\end{document}
```

produces

`\dots` after the beginn

`\textellipsis` after the beginn

`\dots` after the beginn

`\textellipsis` after the beginn

ow some words `\dots`?

ow some words `\textellipsis`?

*rather than*

ds ... after the begin:  
 now some words ... ?  
 now some words ... ?

So I'm not sure this option works quite as intended...

**EDIT** Moreover, `xspace`'s author recommends avoiding the package.

edited Oct 10 '15 at 22:56

answered Oct 10 '15 at 22:25



cfr

96.3k 4 90 217

May be using `\dots` (unicode ellipsis) solves this inconsistency with spaces and more :) Just load `inputenc` and declare the unicode character (or even use `newunicodechar` . - Manuel Oct 10 '15 at 23:27

@Manuel I don't think so... Did you see [this](#)? Or are you suggesting something without `xspace` ? - cfr Oct 10 '15 at 23:46

I meant that the fact that `\dots` is not `\dots` the next space is not gobbled, so it can be controlled much easier, rather than use `xspace` . - Manuel Oct 11 '15 at 10:58

@Manuel But then you need to add a matching amount of space when the next character is a punctuation mark i.e. to match the space between the dots. I'm not sure this is more easily controlled. - cfr Oct 11 '15 at 12:22

@Manuel Yes, but I fear to repeat David's mistakes :). - cfr Oct 11 '15 at 18:18

there's no space after `\dots` because spaces after a control sequence are ignored (except as needed to recognize the end of the control sequence).

the usual recommendation is to insert a "slash space" after `\dots\` to get an ordinary (as opposed to end-of-sentence) space. however, if `\dots` really does end a sentence, then entering it as `\dots{}` or `{\dots}` will trigger the end-of-sentence space.

`\dots` can appear in contexts where it's not possible to determine whether it should be followed by a space in the output, or indeed, what kind of space.

**edit:** after reading the excellent [answer by cfr](#), i decided to do a little digging. the definitions of `\dots` in both plain tex and latex are somewhat convoluted, but the point about the extra space being added to `\dots` (and `\textellipsis`) to ensure good spacing before another punctuation mark is right on.

what i discovered, though, is that, even though `\dots` and `\textellipsis` share this feature in text mode, `\ldots` (on which both are based) is free from it, as shown in this simple demonstration.

```
\documentclass[12pt]{article}
\begin{document}
\fbbox{.}\quad\fbbox{.\,}\quad\fbbox{\dots}\quad\fbbox{\$\ldots\$}
\end{document}
```



so, if your goal is absolutely symmetrical spaces before and after the dots, use `\ldots` directly. (in other words, don't be `la{tex}zy`.)

on another tack, in a comment someone asked about using the unicode character (U+2026) directly. when implemented in a font, that character is usually designed (in most fonts that i've seen) with tighter spacing than provided by `\dots` and would look out of place in most tex settings.

edited Oct 11 '15 at 13:03

answered Oct 10 '15 at 21:19



**barbara beeton**

54.6k 5 109 242