A Simple Set of \LaTeX{} Custom Commands

W. Ethan Duckworth, Loyola University Maryland, 2014

Here is a sampling of commands I've created in the context of classroom material. They are fairly simple and pretty typical of the kind of commands most users of \LaTeX{} create. Most of them are shortcuts: they make it easier to enter code, read the code, and adjust the formatting of the input.

% Taking derivatives
\newcommand{\dd}[2]{\dfrac{d#1}{d#2}}
\newcommand{\dydx}{\dd yx}
\newcommand{\ddx}{\dd {}x}
\newcommand{\ddt}{\dd {}t}

% Taking partial derivatives
\newcommand{\pp}[2]{\frac{\partial #1}{\partial #2}}
\newcommand{\ppx}{\pp {}x}
\newcommand{\ppy}{\pp {}y}
\newcommand{\ppz}{\pp {}z}

% evaluating anti-derivatives
\newcommand{\eval}{\Big|}

% formatting some important single letters
\newcommand{\e}{\mbox{\large $e$}}
\renewcommand{\epsilon}{\varepsilon}
\renewcommand{\phi}{\varphi}

% Labelling L'Hospital's Rule
\newcommand{\LH}{\stackrel{\text{LH}}{=}}

% Asking if two things are equal
\newcommand{\eq}{\stackrel{\text{?}}{=}}

% making a larger decimal point
\newcommand{\bd}{\mbox{\LARGE .}}

% For using in integrals, like \int x \, dx
\newcommand{\intx}{\int x \, dx}
\newcommand{\intdy}{\int dy}
\newcommand{\intdz}{\int dz}
\newcommand{\intdt}{\int dt}
\newcommand{\intdu}{\int du}
\newcommand{\intdv}{\int dv}
\newcommand{\intdtheta}{\int d\theta}

% For specially formatted fractions
\newcommand{\textfrac}[2]{\frac{\text{#1}}{\text{#2}}}
\newcommand{\change}[2]{\frac{\text{change in #1}}{\text{change in #2}}}

% Better appearance for a "skinny frac"
% like \frac{1x}{2}
\newcommand{\sfrac}[2]{\frac{\ #1 \ }{#2}}

Guideline on creating shortcuts:

- Readability is much more important than ease of input (this opinion isn't just mine). Therefore, I recommend not creating $\backslash \text{\left}$ as a shortcut for $\left$, but I do create a shortcut of $\backslash dydx$ for $\backslash \text{\frac{dy}{dx}}$. The former is just a shortcut for inputting but makes readability worse. The latter improves readability and consistency in formatting.

- Use commands to create improvements in formatting. For instance

\[ e^{-(x-\mu)^2/\sigma} \text{ produces } e^{-(x-%mu)^2/\sigma} \]

and

\[ e^{-(x-\mu)^2/\sigma} \text{ produces } e^{-(x-%mu)^2/\sigma} \]