\textbf{Giving leading a number}

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\section{Introduction}

\LaTeX\ defines two methods of specifying \textit{leading}\footnote{Pronounced to rhyme with ‘sledding’; the word arises from the spacers of lead used to separate lines of text in traditional metal press typesetting}, or the distance between successive lines of text:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \texttt{\linespread{⟨ratio to original⟩}}, and
  \item \texttt{\baselinestretch{⟨ratio to original⟩}}.
\end{itemize}

(I’ve got no idea what the difference between the two methods actually is.)

For example, in the \texttt{pracjourn} class, a font size and leading of 12 pt/15.5 pt was chosen, which required the preamble declaration \texttt{\linespread{1.069}}, because the default leading for a 12 pt document is 14.5 pt and 14.5 \times 1.069 \approx 15.5.

But this is not how most people define the typesetting of their paragraphs. Instructions don’t come from the designer: “increase the leading 1.069 times the standard size in a 12 pt document”. Instead, it’s common to see “give me a leading of 15.5 pt”. And indeed, that’s how \LaTeX\’s \texttt{\fontsize} command works.

This package defines the \texttt{\leading{⟨length⟩}} command, which sets the leading immediately to the ⟨length⟩ specified. Here’s an example:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \texttt{\leading{11pt}}
    Upon observing him more closely, I perceived that he wore a black silk apron over his small-clothes; and this was a thing which I thought very odd. Before I had time to make any remark, however, upon so singular a circumstance, he interrupted me with a second “\textit{ahem!”}
  \item \texttt{\leading{5mm}}
    Upon observing him more closely, I perceived that he wore a black silk apron over his small-clothes; and this was a thing which I thought very odd. Before I had time to make any remark, however, upon so singular a circumstance, he interrupted me with a second “\textit{ahem!”}
\end{itemize}
2 Notes

The \leading command will ignore spaces after it.

As \leading uses \linespread internally, the results of \leading{15.5pt} in a 12pt document and \linespread{1.069} are identical. This means that the leading at other font sizes (e.g., \small, \large) will also be adjusted by the same ratio.

Since \leading uses a fixed length, if the font size of the document changes then its value will need to be adjusted. This isn’t a problem in general, however, because it is common for different ratios of linespread to be used for different absolute font sizes anyway.

File I

The leading package

\ProvidesPackage{leading}
[2008/12/11 v0.3 Define leading length]
\RequirePackage{calc}
\leading \:#1:\ Leading (or ‘baselineskip’) length
This is the whole package. Not much to it, really.
\newcommand\leading[1]{%
\begingroup
\@tempdima=\f@baselineskip\relax
\@tempdimb=#1\relax
\setlength\@tempdimc{1pt*\ratio{\@tempdimb}{\@tempdima}}% 
\global\@tempdimc=\@tempdimc
\endgroup
\linespread{\strip@pt\@tempdimc}\selectfont\ignorespaces}

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