

The `cellspace` package

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Abstract

This package is intended to allow automatic spacing out of the lines of an array. People often complain about text touching the `\hline` of a tabular when it is too high or too deep. For example (with the `amsmath` package) with `\dfrac{1}{2}` surrounded by `\hlines`. This package provides a modifier `S` to usual column types (`l`, `c`, `r`, `p`, `m`, and `b`) that ensures a minimal spacing between rules and cells of an array.

Introduction

The mechanism used by \LaTeX to build tables—using struts—has an important consequence: the cells of a table that extend too much tend to touch horizontal rules. First example:

```
\begin{tabular}{cc}
\hline
\itshape Bond &
\itshape Distance ($\mathrm{\mathring{A}}$) $\backslash$
\hline
C--C          & $1.53$ \backslash
C--H          & $1.10$ \backslash
\hline
\end{tabular}
```

<i>Bond</i>	<i>Distance (\mathring{A})</i>
C–C	1.53
C–H	1.10

Second example:

```

\begin{tabular}{c}
\hline
\itshape Formula \\\
\hline

$$e = 1 + \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{6} + \cdots + \frac{1}{k!} + \cdots$$


$$\pi = 4 \left( 1 - \frac{1}{3} + \frac{1}{5} + \cdots + \frac{(-1)^k}{2k+1} + \cdots \right)$$

\hline
\end{tabular}

```

<i>Formula</i>
$e = 1 + \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{6} + \cdots + \frac{1}{k!} + \cdots$
$\pi = 4 \left(1 - \frac{1}{3} + \frac{1}{5} + \cdots + \frac{(-1)^k}{2k+1} + \cdots \right)$

The classical workarounds `\[$\langle dimen \rangle$]` and `\noalign{\vspace{ $\langle dimen \rangle$ }}` are not very powerful and need fine tuning.

How to solve this?

The `cellspace` loads several packages to carry out its job: `array`, `ifthen`, and `calc`. It redefines several internals, still not too many (`\@startpbox` and `\@endpbox`). By default, the tables will behave as usual. To improve the spacing of your tables, you must change the table preamble and prepend `S` to the column types `l`, `c`, `r`. The same holds for the paragraph columns `p`, `m`, and `b`, except that they must be surrounded by an extra pair of braces. For instance, the default behaviour of a table beginning with

```
\begin{tabular}{l l l p{3cm}}
```

should be changed into

```
\begin{tabular}{Sl Sl Sl S{p{3cm}}}
```

The `cellspace` has two parameters governing the spacing of the cells. The dimension `\cellspacetoplimit` is the minimal spacing required between the actual text the cell is made up of and the top of the cell (where `\hlines` may appear), if the spacing is less than this threshold, a space of `\cellspacetoplimit` is added, otherwise nothing is done. Conversely, at the bottom the dimension `\cellspacebottomlimit` is the minimal space required between the bottom of the cell and the text itself. These parameters can be changed in the document preamble using `\setlength`. Together with `booktabs`, the results look rather good. `cellspace` may work with other column types (defined through `\newcolumntype` for instance); it will assume by default that an unknown column is a LR-mode column. Otherwise you have to tell `cellspace` something like

Bugs and limitations

This package hasn't been heavily tested, so there may be plenty of bugs. As usual, bugs will certainly arise in complicated situations because tables can become very complicated (for instance, this package hasn't been designed with nested tables into mind). In simple cases however, it should work nicely. The package loads **array** ensuring a peaceful collaboration with each other. Other packages of special interest haven't been tested: **tabularx**¹ and **longtable** in particular.

A	B B B B B B B B
A A	B B B B B B B B B B B B B B B B
A A A A	$\frac{1}{2}$ B
	B B B B $\frac{1}{2}$

tabls² is a package that does a similar job than **cellspace**. The differences are: **tabls** affects a whole table while **cellspace** affects only the columns on which applies the modifier **S**. Each cell affected by **cellspace** is affected in the same way: there must be enough space above ($> \backslash\text{cellspacetoplimit}$) and below the text ($> \backslash\text{cellspacebottomlimit}$), even if no **\hline** is present. In the other hand, **tabls** ensures a minimal distance using one threshold parameter **\tablinesep** applying between rows not separated by a rule and using a systematic spacer **\arraylinesep** when there is a rule (whereas **cellspace** can leave a cell as is if the distance to the rule is big enough). As a last point, **tabls**, as far as I can see, cannot work with **array**.

¹A one minute test seems to indicate that it works provided **tabularx** is loaded after **cellspace**. The example on this page illustrates this. A thirty second test indicates that **cellspace** works correctly with **longtable** as long as only LR-mode columns are concerned.

²Thanks to Jim Hefferon for pointing this out.