The cases package

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Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 2000, 2002, 2020 by Donald Arseneau, asnd@triumf.ca. These macros may be freely transmitted, reproduced, or modified provided that this notice is left intact. Sub-equation numbering is based on subeqn.sty by Stephen Gildea; parts are based on L\TeX's eqnarray by Leslie Lamport and the L\TeX3 team; and some on amsmath.sty by the American Mathematical Society.

Description

The cases package provides a L\TeX environment numcases to produce multi-case equations with a separate equation number for each case. There is also subnumcases which numbers each case with the overall equation number plus a letter [8a, 8b, etc.]. The syntax is

\begin{numcases}{\langle left side \rangle}
\langle case 1 \rangle ~ & \langle explanation 1 \rangle \\
\langle case 2 \rangle ~ & \langle explanation 2 \rangle \\
\ldots
\langle case n \rangle ~ & \langle explanation n \rangle
\end{numcases}

Each \langle case \rangle is a math formula, to be typeset in display-math mode, like in a regular numbered equation. Each \langle explanation \rangle is a piece of lr-mode text (which may contain math mode in \((\ldots)\) or $\ldots$). The explanations are optional. Equation numbers are inserted automatically, just as for the eqnarray environment. In particular, the \texttt{\nonumber} command suppresses an equation number and the \texttt{\label} command allows reference to a particular case. In a subnumcases environment, a \texttt{\label} in the \langle left side \rangle of the equation gives the overall equation number, without any letter.

To use this package, include \texttt{\usepackage{cases}} after \texttt{\documentclass}, and also after \texttt{\usepackage{amsmath}} if you are using that.

* This manual corresponds to cases v3.1, dated 2020/03/10.
Question: Is there a `numcases*` environment for unnumbered cases?

Answer: That would have the natural name `cases`, and it is provided by `AMS-LaTeX` (`amsmath` package), or by this package given the `[cases]` option. It can also be achieved by using an ordinary `LaTeX` array between `\left\{` and `\right.`.

Speaking of `amsmath` and package options, there are differences between the style used for this package and the cases done by `amsmath` (see below), but cases.sty has options to increase compatibility. Here is the full list of options for this package.

- `[subnum]` Force all `numcases` environments to be treated as `subnumcases`.
- `[amsstyle]` For compatibility with `amsmath`’s `cases`, make `numcases` use cramped math style (\textstyle), and put explanations in the same math style.
- `[casesstyle]` Change `amsmath`’s `cases` environment to work in the text/math style of `numcases`.
- `[cases]` Define a `cases` environment for use without `amsmath`. (This is actually the same as the `[casesstyle]` option.)
- `[fleqn]` Flush-left equation alignment, indented by \mathindent or \mathmargin. (Usually inherited from the \documentclass options.)
- `[leqno]` Left-side equation numbering (usually inherited from the \documentclass options). This looks silly with numbered cases!

Examples

A simple example is:

```latex
\begin{numcases}{|x|\ast}
  x, & for $x \geq 0$
  -x, & for $x < 0$
\end{numcases}
```

Giving:

\[ |x| = \begin{cases} 
  x, & \text{for } x \geq 0 \\
  -x, & \text{for } x < 0 
\end{cases} \] (1)

Another example, employing sub-numbering, is calculating the square root of a complex number \(c + id\). First compute

\[ w \equiv \begin{cases} 
  0 & \text{for } c = d = 0 \\
  \sqrt{|c|} \sqrt{\frac{1 + \sqrt{1 + (d/c)^2}}{2}} & \text{for } |c| \geq |d| \\
  \sqrt{|d|} \sqrt{\frac{|c/d| + \sqrt{1 + (c/d)^2}}{2}} & \text{for } |c| < |d| 
\end{cases} \] (3a)

(3b)

(3c)
Then, using \( w \) from eq. (3), the square root is

\[
\sqrt{c + id} = \begin{cases} 
0, & w = 0 \text{ (case 3a)} \\
\frac{d}{2w}, & w \neq 0, c \geq 0 \\
\frac{|d|}{2w} + iw, & w \neq 0, c < 0, d \geq 0 \\
\frac{|d|}{2w} - iw, & w \neq 0, c < 0, d < 0 
\end{cases}
\]

These equations, eq. (3) and (4), were produced by:

Another example, employing sub-numbering, is calculating the square root of a complex number \( c+id \). First compute:

\[
\begin{cases} 
0 & \text{for } c = d = 0 \\
\sqrt{|c|} \sqrt{\frac{1 + \sqrt{1 + (d/c)^2}}{2}} & \text{for } |c| \geq |d| \\
\sqrt{|d|} \sqrt{\frac{|c/d| + \sqrt{1 + (c/d)^2}}{2}} & \text{for } |c| < |d| 
\end{cases}
\]

Then, using \( w \) from eq. \((\ref{weqn})\), the square root is:

\[
\begin{cases} 
0, & w = 0 \text{ (case } 3a) \\
w + \frac{id}{2w}, & w \neq 0, c \geq 0 \\
\frac{|d|}{2w} + iw, & w \neq 0, c < 0, d \geq 0 \\
\frac{|d|}{2w} - iw, & w \neq 0, c < 0, d < 0 
\end{cases}
\]

Compatiblibility with amsmath

When used in conjunction with amsmath.sty, the cases package will obey the the variant commands \tag, \notag, and \mathmargin, however the formatting details differ between amsmath’s cases environment and numcases. For comparison, equation (3) formatted by amsmath and its cases environment may be entered as:

\[
\begin{equation} \label{wams} 
\begin{cases} 
0 & \text{for } c = d = 0 \\
\sqrt{|c|} \sqrt{\frac{1 + \sqrt{1 + (d/c)^2}}{2}} & \text{for } |c| \geq |d| \\
\sqrt{|d|} \sqrt{\frac{|c/d| + \sqrt{1 + (c/d)^2}}{2}} & \text{for } |c| < |d| 
\end{cases}
\end{equation}
\]
which produces

\[ w \equiv \begin{cases} 
0 & \text{for } c = d = 0 \\
\sqrt{|c|} \sqrt{\frac{1 + \sqrt{1 + (d/c)^2}}{2}} & \text{for } |c| \geq |d| \\
\sqrt{|d|} \sqrt{\frac{|c/d| + \sqrt{1 + (c/d)^2}}{2}} & \text{for } |c| < |d| 
\end{cases} \] (5)

To get this more compact layout with \texttt{numcases} you can insert \texttt{textstyle} at the beginning of each case, as needed, or use the \texttt{cases} package option \texttt{[amsstyle]}. To have the (unnumbered) \texttt{cases} environment give the more open layout of eq. (3) you can put \texttt{displaystyle} at the beginning of each case, or use the option \texttt{[casesstyle]} for the \texttt{cases} package. (Yes these go with the \texttt{cases} package, they are not options for \texttt{amsmath}.)

Another slight difference is that the cases within \texttt{numcases} can be right-justified by inserting \texttt{\hfill} at the beginning of each, which might be desired in rare situations, like maybe the absolute value example numbered (1) and (2) above.

For full disclosure, even without any relevant package options, \texttt{cases.sty} will slightly adjust the \texttt{cases} environment from \texttt{amsmath}, by adding a little space after the left brace.

\section*{Sub-numbering}

For control of the sub-equation-numbering style, see the \texttt{AMSTeX} documentation for \texttt{subequations}, currently in section 3.11.3. If you are not using amsmath, that documentation still mostly applies, except the name for regular equation numbers is then ‘mainequation’ instead of ‘parentequation’. Also, the sub-numbering style can be controlled more easily by defining \texttt{\thesubequation}. An example for capitalized letters is

\texttt{\renewcommand\thesubequation{\themainequation.\Alph{equation}}} % 13.C

(noting that the counter to reference is ‘equation’ not ‘subequation’).