footmisc —
a portmanteau package
for customizing footnotes in \LaTeX\*

Robin Fairbairns†    Frank Mittelbach‡

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†Formerly: University of Cambridge Computer Laboratory, Cambridge, UK
‡Responsible maintainer since 2018
History

This package originated as support of a personal project, which I (Robin) was switching to \LaTeX\ 2e over the Christmas holiday period of 1993, using the first \beta\ release.

In its first form, it was known as the “footnote” package, but by the time I had released it to CTAN, that name had already been used by a package written by Mark Wooding. So the package is now known (as you can see) as “footmisc”.

Frank took over maintenance in 2018 but due to other commitments never got around finishing the changes he started to make in 2018.

In 2022 a few new options (abovefloats, belowfloats, and bottomfloats got introduced and the package now works with hyperref regardless of loading order. There are however, still a few restrictions when using both packages together, in particular the \texttt{multiple} option does not fully work.

1 User interface — package options

The \texttt{footmisc} package provides several different customizations of the way footnotes are represented in \LaTeX\ 2e documents (the sources of the code in this package are various, but all of it has been massaged by the author; where the code comes from elsewhere, there are attributions given below, somewhere or other).

The interface to the package’s options is mostly rather simple — each one is presented as an option in the \texttt{\usepackage} command, and for most, nothing else needs to be done. For example, to use a useful and consistent set, the author invokes the package with the command \texttt{\usepackage[perpage,para,symbol\*]{footmisc}}.

For a small number of options, there are additional parameters available; these are described in the subsections below.

1.1 Option \texttt{perpage}

This option resets footnote numbering for each page of the document. It needs at least two passes to do this correctly (though it comes as close as possible on the first pass). You generally have to make two passes with \LaTeX\ anyway, to get the cross-references right, so an additional pass for this purpose shouldn’t cause any additional problem. The option includes code to report that ‘\texttt{Label(s) may have changed}’ which will help the poor user to realize that (yet) another run is in order.
1.2 Option para

This option (derived from code by Dominik Wujastyk and Chris Rowley) causes footnotes to be typeset as a single paragraph at the bottom of the page on which they occur. In the case that there is only one footnote on the page, no effect will be observed. However, if there are several footnotes on the page, they will be run together in the page foot, each introduced by its footnote mark. The original demand for the option came from the needs of those preparing critical editions; such documents typically have large numbers of small footnotes, which look ridiculous if each is typeset in a paragraph of its own; in most other disciplines, such multiplicities of footnotes represent mere self-indulgence: the author of this package is disgracefully guilty of this.

Please note that “old” \LaTeX installations may have problems with the algorithm for para footnotes on very wide pages (for example, those used by the a0poster class). Recent \LaTeX installations use an improved technique that is believed not to be susceptible to this problem.

1.3 Option side

This option (suggested by Frank Mittelbach) causes footnotes to be typeset using the \marginpar command: this has the advantage that the note appears close to its “call-up”, but has all the disadvantages associated with the \marginpar command (which consumes ‘float’ slots, and doesn’t always place itself correctly at the top of pages in two-sided documents). Since the measure in which the footnote is to be typeset is likely to be pretty narrow, users of the side option are recommended also to use the ragged option, to avoid ugly spacing and line breaks.

There is a further problem (apart from the occasional failure to place the marginal note on the correct side of the page) in two-sided documents: one would like ‘raggedness’ to appear differently in different margins (setting the left, rather than the right, side ragged in the left margin). (The author would welcome suggestions on means of addressing the problem.)

1.4 Option ragged and \footnotelayout

The package provides facilities for ragged right setting of footnotes (so long as the para option isn’t in effect). The change is effected by use of the command \footnotelayout: the package inserts this command into the start of the argument of \footnotetext (in effect: \footnote works, roughly, by calling the guts of \footnotetext at its end).

If you want to use some special effect other than ragged right, feel free to change \footnotelayout yourself: some intriguing (and completely undesirable) results are no doubt available. Change the setting simply by use of \renewcommand{\footnotelayout}{...}. The ragged option simply sets \footnotelayout to set \raggedright or \RaggedRight as appropriate. (If you intend to use the ragged2e package, load it before footmisc — if footmisc finds \RaggedRight is available, it automatically uses it in place of \raggedright.)
1.5 Option symbol

This option simply establishes that footnotes are ‘labelled’ by a symbol sequence. The command used is equivalent to that suggested in \LaTeX{} manuals such as Lamport’s (the job performed by the option is very simple, and doesn’t really need a package).

Using symbols to ‘number’ your footnotes can be problematic: there is a limited number of symbols, and \LaTeX{} will report an error if your footnotes exceed that limit. To avoid such problems, consider the symbol* option, or the \setfnsymbol command (see the next two sections), or number your footnotes by the page (see section 1.1).

1.6 Option symbol*

This is the symbol option, but with protection against the tedium that arises because of the instability of the perpage option. When executing the perpage option, the package often allocates footnotes to the wrong pages, only to correct itself on a later run (having warned the user of the need for the later run with a ‘Label(s) may have changed’ message). In these circumstances the symbol option is prone to producing \LaTeX{} errors, which stop processing, and confound automatic generation procedures. In the same situation, the symbol* option produces information messages and a warning message at end document, and the user may scan the log for those messages after processing has stabilized. The option produces numbers (17 and higher, in the case of the default symbol set) in place of symbols, when the footnote number is too large.

1.7 The \setfnsymbol and \DefineFNsymbols commands

NOTE: At some point in the past this interface got extended, but the documentation lags behind so this needs updating.

These commands permit the definition and use of alternative (ordered) sets of symbols for numbering footnotes. \LaTeX{} of course comes with such a set ready-defined, but the choice of symbols isn’t universally loved.

You may define a set of symbols with the \DefineFNsymbols command. \LaTeX{}s default set would be defined by the command:

\begin{verbatim}
\DefineFNsymbols{lamport}{*}{\dag\ddag\S\P}{\dagger\dagger\ddagger\ddagger}
\end{verbatim}

Defined this way, the symbol set produces a “counter too large” error; a robust version of the set (cf. the symbol* option (see 1.6)) is established by using the \DefineFNsymbols command without the optional *. You may select a set of symbols by use of the \setfnsymbol command; so to restore use of the default set, you would type:

\begin{verbatim}
\setfnsymbol{lamport}
\end{verbatim}

This package defines a small selection of alternative sets of symbols, using \DefineFNsymbols:

\begin{verbatim}
bringhurst   * † ‡ §∥ ¶
chicago      * † ‡ §∥ #
wiley        * ** † ‡ §∥
\end{verbatim}
together with a version of Lamport’s original set that, with doubled versions of §
and ¶, and tripled versions of everything but the vertical bars, provides a symbol
range to cover counters up to 16.

This last set, known as lamport* is selected as the default symbol set by the
package.

1.8 Options altering the footnotes/floats relationship

In \LaTeX the default order on a page is “page text” followed by “footnotes” (if any)
followed by “bottom floats” (if any). The spacing between the three components
depends on whether pages are always stretched to the same height (\flushbottom
as used by the book class) or if they can run short (\raggedbottom as used by the
article or report class). If \raggedbottom is in force, then \LaTeX would normally
set the footnotes a mere \skip\footins distant from the bottom of the text
and bottom floats follow separated by \textfloatsep. Both spaces might get
stretched if \flushbottom is in force.

If you want to diverge from this default placement, then there are a number of
alterations that can be made:

• the order of footnotes and floats can be swapped; and
• both footnotes and floats can be forced to the bottom (i.e., \raggedbottom
then only applies to pages with neither), or
• only one of them is forced to the bottom, the other stays close to the text.

These can be achieved by applying one or more of the options discussed below.

1.8.1 Option bottom

This option forces footnotes (but not the floats) to the bottom of the page and
therefore by default also implies belowfloats. If \raggedbottom is in force then
the excess space goes above the footnotes if any are present. If \flushbottom is
in force there is no visible difference to just specifying belowfloats.

1.8.2 Option bottomfloats

If you want force only floats to the bottom while the footnotes stay close to the

1.8.3 Options abovefloats and belowfloats

These two options describe the footnote placement with respect to floats on the
page. \LaTeX’s default is abovefloats, but it can still be useful to specify it because
it fixes the bug discussed in section 1.8.5.

1.8.4 Combining the four options

By default, bottom and bottomfloats options put any excess space (i.e., when
\raggedbottom is in force) between floats and footnotes if both are present on a
given page. If only one of them is present, the excess space goes below the text. If
you prefer both footnotes and floats at the bottom instead, you can achieve this
as follows:
bottom, abovefloats This puts the footnotes above any floats and both at the bottom when present.

bottomfloats, belowfloats This puts floats and footnotes at the bottom but footnotes last if both are present. If there are only footnotes they are still placed at the very bottom (think of them as being placed below the float “area” even if that has no floats inside).

The other combinations are duplicates, e.g., bottom, belowfloats is the same as just specifying bottom.

1.8.5 Fixing a strange behavior of \TeX

In the default case (if footmisc is not loaded) \TeX shows a somewhat strange discrepancy: on most pages the footnotes are attached a distance of \texttt{\skip\footins} from the main text, even if that page is run short (i.e., with \texttt{\raggedbottom} in force). However, whenever the is some infinite stretch at the end of the page, e.g., from using \texttt{\newpage} or \texttt{\clearpage} the footnotes are pushed to the bottom (in particular on the last page of a document or chapter).

This is automatically corrected if footmisc is loaded with any of the options that deal with footnote placement, i.e., abovefloats, belowfloats, bottom, or bottomfloats. In particular, if you want to have the standard \TeX placement (but with this strange behavior fixed, apply abovefloats (which is the normal order but with the bug fixed).

1.9 Option marginal

This option adjusts the position of footnote mark relative to the start of the line in which they appear (the option is incompatible with option para, for obvious reasons).

When this option is in effect, the footnote is set \texttt{\footnotemargin} relative to the left margin of the page; the default setting for \texttt{\footnotemargin} is -0.8em, which means that the footnote mark will be set jutting 0.8em into the margin. If \texttt{\footnotemargin} is a positive length, the footnote mark will be set with its right edge \texttt{\footnotemargin} from the margin. (In the absence of the option, \texttt{\footnotemargin} is set to 1.8em; you may change that value with a \texttt{\setlength} command.)

1.10 Option flushmargin

This option is as option marginal, but sets the footnote marker flush with, but just inside the margin from, the text of the footnote.

1.11 Option hang

This option sets the footnote mark flush with the margin, and makes the body of the footnote hang at an indentation of \texttt{\footnotemargin} (if that is a positive distance), or the width of the marker (if \texttt{\footnotemargin} ≤ 0). The option code itself leaves \texttt{\footnotemargin} at its default value of 1.8em.

The footnote itself may of course be longer than one paragraph; if so, the paragraphs will be separated by the vertical space specified by \texttt{\hangfootparskip},
and the second and subsequent paragraphs are indented by \hangfootparindent. Default values are:

\hangfootparskip 0.5\baselineskip
\hangfootparindent 0em

The user may redefine these values (using \renewcommand); it is best to use the font-size-dependent measures (multiples of \baselineskip for the skip, multiples of em for the indent). Note that the default has only one of the two values non-zero; both zero may result in easily-missed paragraph breaks, and both non-zero is not generally thought to be a good-looking option.

1.12 Option norule
This option suppresses the ‘normal’ footnote rule, and advances \skip\footins a bit to compensate.

1.13 Option splitrule
This option makes puts a full-width rule above the split-off part of a split footnote. (Remember that split footnotes don’t happen if you’re doing paragraph footnotes.)

The option provides three different \footnoterule commands:

\mpfootnoterule for use in minipages
\pagefootnoterule for normal footnotes on regular pages
\splitfootnoterule for the tail of a split footnote

By default, \mpfootnoterule and \pagefootnoterule retain the original definition of \footnoterule (which may have been modified by a norule option), while \splitfootnoterule becomes a full-width rule.

1.14 The stable option
This option deals with the problem of placing footnotes in section titles (and so on). While there is (sometimes, just) justification for putting footnotes in titles, \LaTeX’s treatment of the content of titles militates against them. Of course, the title argument is ordinarily a moving one, and \footnote is a fragile command, but the real problem comes from the way the argument actually moves — which is to two places. The argument moves to the table of contents, where the footnote will (at least) look odd. But the argument also moves to the marks that make up page headers, etc., and there it creates havoc, since page headers are executed in page make-up, and page make-up must not create footnotes.

If you use the stable option, the footnote won’t move to the table of contents or the page headers, but it will be typeset correctly within the title itself.

The situation with \footnotemark is less dire (it could in principle appear in page headers, for example); footnote marks appearing on pages other than where their text appears are none the less confusing, and the stable option treats \footnotemark in the same way that it treats \footnote.
1.15 The multiple option

This option deals with the case where the author needs to type things like

\texttt{mumble\footnote{blah}\footnote{grumble}}

Without special treatment, \LaTeX{} would output something like

\texttt{mumble}\textsuperscript{13,14}

What the \texttt{multiple} option makes of the above is

\texttt{mumble}\textsuperscript{13,14}

which is what most people would expect. The comma separator actually derives from the definition of \texttt{\multfootsep}, which may be changed by \texttt{\renewcommand} if the option is in effect.

The option also treats \texttt{\footnotemark} in the same way.

1.16 User interface — miscellaneous commands

The package also defines some miscellaneous footnote-related commands. The present group provides alternative means of producing footnote marks: \texttt{\footref} and \texttt{\mpfootnotemark}.

When you’re in a minipage, \texttt{\footnote} numbers run according to the minipage’s own footnote counter, and the marks are set in italic letters. However, the numbers used by \texttt{\footnotemark} make reference to the ‘main’ footnote counter, and are set in whatever is the current style for that; this behavior often surprises, and there’s no obvious way in standard \LaTeX{} to “get around” it. The command \texttt{\mpfootnotemark} gets around this problem in a minipage, by generating footnote marks in the same way as those used by \texttt{\footnote}.

In fact, making reference to footnotes in general can be problematic: it can be done by noting down the value of the footnote marker in a counter (or the like) and then using the value in a subsequent \texttt{\footnotemark} or \texttt{\mpfootnotemark}. This is a tedious way of going about things, and doesn’t allow representation of all possible forms of footnote mark; \texttt{\footref} is a form of reference command that sets the reference as if it were a footnote.\footnote{This command is already provided by the \LaTeX{} format.} The label should be set \textit{within} the argument of the footnote command that is being labelled:

\begin{verbatim}
\ldots\footnote{Note text\label{fnlabel}}
\ldots
\ldots potato head\footref{fnlabel}
\end{verbatim}

2 User interface — interactions with other packages

The footmisc package modifies several parts of the \LaTeX{} kernel; what gets modified depends on the options you select. This behavior can cause problems with other packages, particularly those that also modify the kernel.

Known interactions are:
setspace The *setspace* package modifies the way line spacing is calculated in footnotes. *Footmisc* knows about this, and preserves the change. However, you must load *setspace* before *footmisc*.

memoir class The class emulates *setspace*, and we detect that emulation and deal with it in the same way as *setspace*.

manyfoot The *manyfoot* package permits several independent sequences of footnotes. Some preliminary work towards interworking with *footmisc* has been completed, but more remains to be done at the time of writing.

hyperref The *hyperref* package works together with *footmisc* (as proved by this documentation), but at this point in time not all options of *footmisc* can be used — this will change over time.