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If you find yourself needing to use a particular bit of text (with or without LaTeX commands) in your document multiple times, it may be convenient for you to define it as a command, using `\newcommand`. For example, if you were tired of typing the commands for a degree symbol, you might do

```
\newcommand{\dg}{$^\circ$ }
```

and then in your text, you could say

```
At 10 in the morning, it was 68\dg outside
```

and LaTeX would automatically substitute "`^\circ`" to make a degree symbol where you had typed `\dg`.

Next, you can create commands which include arguments, by including a field for the number of arguments in your `\newcommand` line, and putting the arguments themselves in as `#1`, `#2`, and so on. For example, if you were creating a description list and you wanted each of them to have the item itself to be in bold and the rest to be in italics, like so

```
\begin{description}  
  \item[\bf Elephant] {\em A big grey animal with a trunk}  
  \item[\bf Zebra] {\em A stripey looking horse}  
\end{description}
```

then you could use a `\newcommand` for that:

```
\newcommand{\animal}[2]{\item[\bf #1] {\em #2}}  
  
\begin{description}  
  \animal{Elephant}{A big grey animal with a trunk}  
  \animal{Zebra}{A stripey looking horse}  
\end{description}
```