

# The `filecontents` package\*

Scott Pakin  
scott+fc@pakin.org

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## 1 Introduction

`filecontents` There is a little-known environment called `filecontents` that is built into  $\text{\LaTeX} 2_{\epsilon}$ . Here is `filecontents`' description, which was taken from `ltclass.dtx`:

The environment `filecontents` is intended for passing the contents of packages, options, or other files along with a document in a single file. It has one argument, which is the name of the file to create. If that file already exists (maybe only in the current directory if the OS supports a notion of a 'current directory' or 'default directory') then nothing happens (except for an information message) and the body of the environment is bypassed. Otherwise, the body of the environment is written verbatim to the file name given as the first argument, together with some comments about how it was produced.

The environment is allowed only before `\documentclass` to ensure that all packages or options necessary for this particular run are present when needed. The begin and end tags should each be on a line by itself. There is also a star-form; this does not write extra comments into the file.

(The comment about `filecontents` being valid only before `\documentclass` is, in fact, untrue. `filecontents` is allowed anywhere in the document's preamble.)

The `filecontents` package provides a hacked-up version of the `filecontents` and `filecontents*` environments that lifts the two restrictions stated above, namely that existing files are never overwritten and that `filecontents` must be used before the `\documentclass` declaration (really, the `\begin{document}`). `filecontents` is therefore a more convenient way to write external files from within a  $\text{\LaTeX}$  document than is provided by default by the  $\text{\LaTeX} 2_{\epsilon}$  kernel.

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**Sample usage** `filecontents` works much like `verbatim`, except that it takes a mandatory filename argument:

```
\begin{filecontents}{myfile.tex}
This text gets written to \texttt{myfile.tex}.
\end{filecontents}
```

The preceding code will write a `myfile.tex` file with contents resembling the following:

```
%% LaTeX2e file 'myfile.tex'
%% generated by the 'filecontents' environment
%% from source 'mydocument' on 2001/07/31.
%%
This text gets written to \texttt{myfile.tex}.
```

`myfile.tex` can then be incorporated back into the document with `\include` or `\input`. Had `filecontents*` been used instead of `filecontents`, the file would have contained only the “`This text gets written to \texttt{myfile.tex}.`” line. `filecontents*` is therefore useful for writing non- $\text{\LaTeX}$  files such as Encapsulated PostScript files.

If you use the `ltxtable` package you may find `filecontents` particularly useful. `ltxtable` is a crude conglomeration of `longtable`, which allows tables to cross page boundaries, and `tabularx`, which enables tables to stretch to a specified width. `ltxtable`'s interface is a bit cumbersome, however; it requires that the `longtable` environment be contained in a separate file. With the `filecontents` package you can create this file right before the `\LTXtable` invocation—a far more convenient alternative than having to manually place the table within a separate file.

## 2 Implementation

Most users can stop reading at this point. The Implementation section contains the annotated source code for the `filecontents` package itself, which is useful only to people who want a detailed and precise explanation of how `filecontents` works.

To give credit where credit is due, I wrote virtually none of the `filecontents` code myself. It comes almost exclusively from the  $\text{\LaTeX} 2_{\epsilon}$  source code, specifically from the file `ltxclass.dtx`, which is attributed to Frank Mittelbach, Chris Rowley, Alan Jeffrey, and David Carlisle. I merely made a few small changes (indicated below by bracketed blocks of code and comments) to make the `filecontents` environment more convenient to use.

```
1 (*package)
```

`\filec@ntents` Except where indicated, the source—including comments—to the `\filec@ntents` macro was taken verbatim from `ltxclass.dtx`.

```
2 \begingroup%
```

```

3 \catcode'\*=11 %
4 \catcode'\^^M\active%
5 \catcode'\^^L\active\let^^L\relax%
6 \catcode'\^^I\active%
7 \gdef\filecontents#1{%
8   \openin\@inputcheck#1 %

```

In the original code a pre-existing file would not be overwritten. In the new version the file existence check is used solely to decide whether to output “Writing file ‘*filename*’” or “Overwriting file ‘*filename*’”. Control flow then always falls through to what used to be the `\ifEOF` case (file does not exist; open it), never the `\else` case (file already exists; do nothing).

```

9   \ifEOF\@inputcheck%
10     \@latexwarning@no@line%
11     {Writing file ‘\@currdir#1’}%
12   \else %
13     \@latexwarning@no@line%
14     {Overwriting file ‘\@currdir#1’}%
15   \fi %
16   \closein\@inputcheck %
17   \chardef\reserved@c15 %
18   \ch@ck7\reserved@c\write%
19   \immediate\openout\reserved@c#1\relax%

```

```

20 \if@tempswa%
21   \immediate\write\reserved@c{%
22     \@percentchar\@percentchar\space%
23     \expandafter\@gobble\string\LaTeX2e file ‘#1’^^J%
24     \@percentchar\@percentchar\space generated by the %
25     ‘\@currenvir’ \expandafter\@gobblefour\string\newenvironment^^J%
26     \@percentchar\@percentchar\space from source ‘\jobname’ on %
27     \number\year/\two@digits\month/\two@digits\day.^^J%
28     \@percentchar\@percentchar}%
29 \fi%
30 \let\do\@makeother\dospecials%

```

The `inputenc` packages might have marked some of the upper 128 character codes “active” (category code 13). That confuses `filecontents`. Hence, we locally mark each of the upper 128 character codes as “letter” (category code 11) so that they can be written correctly to a file.

```

31 \count0=128\relax %
32 \loop %
33   \catcode\count0=11\relax %
34   \advance\count0 by 1\relax %
35   \ifnum\count0<256 %
36   \repeat %

```

```

37 \edef\E{\@backslashchar end\string{\@currenvir\string}}%
38 \edef\reserved@b{%
39   \def\noexpand\reserved@b%
40     #####1\E####2\E####3\relax}%
41 \reserved@b{%
42   \ifx\relax##3\relax%

There was no \end{filecontents}
43   \immediate\write\reserved@c{##1}%
44   \else%

There was a \end{filecontents}, so stop this time.
45   \edef^^M{\noexpand\end{\@currenvir}}%
46   \ifx\relax##1\relax%
47   \else%

Text before the \end, write it with a warning.
48     \@latex@warning{Writing text '##1' before %
49       \string\end{\@currenvir}\MessageBreak as last line of #1}%
50     \immediate\write\reserved@c{##1}%
51     \fi%
52     \ifx\relax##2\relax%
53     \else%

Text after the \end, ignore it with a warning.
54     \@latex@warning{%
55       Ignoring text '##2' after \string\end{\@currenvir}}%
56     \fi%
57     \fi%
58     ^^M}%

59 \catcode'\^^L\active%
60 \let\L\@undefined%
61 \def^^L{\@ifundefined L^^J^^J^^J}%
62 \catcode'\^^I\active%
63 \let\I\@undefined%
64 \def^^I{\@ifundefined I\space\space}%
65 \catcode'\^^M\active%
66 \edef^^M##1^^M{%
67   \noexpand\reserved@b##1\E\E\relax}}%
68 \endgroup%

```

`\fc@no@preamblecmds` L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X 2<sub>ε</sub> declares `\filecontents`, `\filecontents*`, and all of the related helper macros as `\@onlypreamble`, meaning they become invalid after the `\begin{document}`. The following code re-enables their usage anywhere in the document. It was taken from the `pkgindoc` package (which is generated from `ltxclass.dtx`), but modified to re-enable only the commands needed by `filecontents`, not all of the class and package option-processing commands, as well.

```

69 \def\fc@no@preamblecmds#1\do\filecontents#2\do\filec@ntents#3\relax{%
70   \gdef\@preamblecmds{#1#3}}
71 \expandafter\fc@no@preamblecmds\@preamblecmds\relax

```

