

From \begin to \end

The Complete LaTeX Guide

Day 7 of 7 — Troubleshooting, Polish & Independent Mastery

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Format: 7-Day Intensive Course

Session: Day 7 of 7

Today's Agenda

- 1 Recap & Today's Goal
- 2 Reading Compile Errors Like a Pro
- 3 Search Strategy: TeX StackExchange
- 4 Final Proofreading Pass
- 5 Exporting the Final PDF
- 6 Where to Go Next
- 7 Practice

Quick Recap: Day 6

Yesterday: browsing and adapting a real journal template, filling in title/author/abstract/JEL/keyword metadata, and migrating a full draft into a template end-to-end.

Today's goal: not more syntax – **self-sufficiency**. You should leave able to diagnose your own errors without a tutor in the room.

The Big Three Errors, Revisited

```
\textb{Significant results}      % typo'd command
The share of GDP is 15%.         % unescaped percent sign
\begin{itemize} ... \end{document}
```

Compiled Output

```
! Undefined control sequence.
! Missing $ inserted.
! LaTeX Error: \begin{itemize} ended by \end{document}.
```

Why & What: Undefined control sequence: almost always a typo'd command name – check spelling and that the defining package is loaded. **Missing \$ inserted:** a math symbol (or an unescaped %/&) used outside math mode. **Mismatched begin/end:** count your \begins against your \ends – the reported error line is often *after* the real mistake, not at it.

Finding the Fix in Under a Minute

- 1 Copy the **exact** error message (drop file-specific details like line numbers).
- 2 Search `tex.stackexchange.com` with that text plus the package name if relevant (e.g. “natbib undefined control sequence”).
- 3 Prefer answers with the **green checkmark** and a high vote count.
- 4 If nothing matches, search for the *symptom* instead (“booktabs table too wide”) rather than the error text.

Nearly every error you will ever see has already been asked and answered there – searching well is a core LaTeX skill, not a shortcut.

The Pre-Submission Proofreading Checklist

- **Spacing:** no leftover double blank lines causing odd paragraph breaks; consistent spacing around equations.
- **Orphaned headings:** a `\section` stranded alone at the bottom of a page.
- **Table/figure placement:** nothing floated to a strange spot or overlapping text.
- **Citation style consistency:** `citet/citep` used correctly and consistently throughout.
- **All ?? resolved:** search your PDF for “??” – it means a `\ref` or `\cite` didn't resolve.

Pre-Submission Checklist

- Compile **twice** (or more) so all cross-references and the table of contents settle correctly.
- Confirm the PDF opens cleanly and page count matches the journal's length limit.
- Check the title, author, affiliation, abstract, and JEL codes match the journal's required format exactly.
- Download the compiled PDF from Overleaf (Menu → Download PDF) for final submission.

Beyond This Course

- **“The Not So Short Introduction to LaTeX2e”** (lshort, free PDF) – your ongoing reference manual once the basics are fluent.
- The wider **Overleaf documentation library** (overleaf.com/learn) – covers everything not reached this week (posters, presentations with Beamer, TikZ diagrams, and more).
- **Wikibooks LaTeX** – a free, community-maintained companion textbook.
- **TeX StackExchange** – your debugging partner for as long as you use LaTeX.

Hands-on Exercise

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Your instructor will deliberately inject 3–5 common errors into your document (a missing brace, an unescaped %, a mismatched `\begin/\end`). Diagnose and fix each one **unaided**, using only the Overleaf “Errors” page and TeX StackExchange.

Homework

Produce the final, submission-ready PDF of the paper you have built across the week, and complete a full self-review against your Day 6 template's requirements.

Resources for today:

- Overleaf – “Errors”
- TeX StackExchange – tex.stackexchange.com
- Wikibooks LaTeX – Errors and Fixes / Tips and Tricks chapters
- “The Not So Short Introduction to LaTeX2e” (lshort, free PDF)

From `\begin` to `\end`

Seven days ago you had zero LaTeX experience. Today you can write, format, cite, and submit a complete economics paper – independently.

Congratulations.

Thank You

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