

NAME

`col` - filter reverse line-feeds

SYNOPSIS

`col [-bfx]`

DESCRIPTION

Col reads from the standard input and writes onto the standard output. It performs the line overlays implied by reverse line feeds (ASCII code ESC-7), and by forward and reverse half-line-feeds (ESC-9 and ESC-8). *Col* is particularly useful for filtering multicolumn output made with the `.rt` command of *nroff*(1) and output resulting from use of the *tbl*(1) preprocessor.

If the `-b` option is given, *col* assumes that the output device in use is not capable of backspacing. In this case, if two or more characters are to appear in the same place, only the last one read will be output.

Although *col* accepts half-line motions in its input, it normally does not emit them on output. Instead, text that would appear between lines is moved to the next lower full-line boundary. This treatment can be suppressed by the `-f` (fine) option; in this case, the output from *col* may contain forward half-line-feeds (ESC-9), but will still never contain either kind of reverse line motion.

Unless the `-x` option is given, *col* will convert white space to tabs on output wherever possible to shorten printing time.

The ASCII control characters SO (\017) and SI (\016) are assumed by *col* to start and end text in an alternate character set. The character set to which each input character belongs is remembered, and on output SI and SO characters are generated as appropriate to ensure that each character is printed in the correct character set.

On input, the only control characters accepted are space, backspace, tab, return, new-line, SI, SO, VT (\013), and ESC followed by 7, 8, or 9. The VT character is an alternate form of full reverse line-feed, included for compatibility with some earlier programs of this type. All other non-printing characters are ignored.

SEE ALSO

nroff(1), *tbl*(1)

NOTES

The input format accepted by *col* matches the output produced by *nroff*(1) with either the `-T37` or `-Tlp` options. Use `-T37` (and the `-f` option of *col*) if the ultimate disposition of the output of *col* will be a device that can interpret half-line motions, and `-Tlp` otherwise.

BUGS

Cannot back up more than 128 lines.

Allows at most 800 characters, including backspaces, on a line.