Card
A Pocket Specification Format

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Friday, March 13, 2026

ABSTRACT
A card is a pocket document on A6 paper, one
hundred and five millimeters in the width and one
hundred and forty-eight in the height, set in
monospace, flush left, with paragraph spacing and
bold uppercase headings. It is a format for
specifications, definitions, glossaries, and
standards—text that is meant to be consulted
rather than read. This document describes the card
and is typeset according to its own description.

PAPER AND MARGINS
The card is set upon a leaf A6, being a pocket book
fit for the hand. The margins are ten millimeters
sinister and ten millimeters dexter, fourteen
millimeters at the chief and fourteen at the base.
The surplus of four millimeters vertical provides
clearance where the thumb rests upon the leaf. The
text block so bounded yields a narrow measure,
which is correct for the format: a specification
is scanned, not savored, and a short line returns

the eye to the left margin before the reader has
time to lose the thread.

FONT

The body is set in JetBrains Mono Light, a
monospace face designed for sustained reading at
small sizes. JetBrains Mono was chosen for three
reasons. First: it possesses a tall x-height,
which preserves legibility at eight points on a
page this small. Second: the Light weight is thin
enough to give the letterforms air inside and
between them, preventing the claustrophobic
density that monospace text produces at text sizes
when set in a regular weight. Third: it ships with
a full complement of weights from Thin through
ExtraBold, permitting the bold face to be set in
SemiBold rather than Bold, which is the correct
pairing with a Light body—one step further from
center in the same direction, producing visible
contrast without the jarring weight differential
that a Light-to-Bold jump would create.

No proportional face is declared. The card is
monospace throughout. When the body requires
emphasis, it is achieved through bold weight alone,
never through italic, the italic being reserved

for part-of-speech annotations in glossary entries
and similar conventional uses.

The font size is eight points, achieved not
through the document class option—which the
article class silently ignores for any value other
than ten, eleven, or twelve—but through a direct
redefinition of the normalsize command via
fontsize at eight points with a leading of 10.8
points. This is the only reliable method of
setting an arbitrary base font size in the article
class, and the failure to use it will result in a
document that claims to be eight points and is in
fact ten, a discrepancy that may persist through
multiple compilation cycles without being detected,
as the author of this document can attest from
recent and humiliating experience.

ALIGNMENT

The card is set flush left throughout. This is
achieved by the raggedright declaration in the
preamble, which disables the justification engine
globally. Justified monospace text is ugly. The
fixed character width means the justification
engine can only adjust word spacing, never letter
spacing, and on a narrow measure the resulting
variation in word spacing produces lines that

alternate between compressed and gaping in a
pattern visible to the naked eye. Flush left
eliminates this problem entirely. The right margin
is ragged and the ragging is honest—it shows where
the words actually end rather than where the
engine wished they would end.

PARAGRAPH TREATMENT

Paragraphs are separated by vertical space equal
to one baselineskip, with zero indentation. In
flush left monospace text, where every line begins
at the left margin at an unpredictable horizontal
position relative to the line above, an indent is
invisible—it cannot be distinguished from a short
preceding line. Vertical space is the only
reliable paragraph signal in a ragged-right
setting, and so vertical space is what the card
uses.

The parskip is set to one full baselineskip rather
than a fraction thereof. A half-baselineskip
parskip is too subtle in monospace—it reads as a
minor typographic accident rather than a deliberate
separation. A full baselineskip is unambiguous:
the reader sees the gap and knows a new paragraph
has begun without consulting the content.

HEADINGS

Section headings are set in bold uppercase, flush left, with no numbering. The spacing is one blank line above the heading—which is the parskip that naturally precedes it as a new paragraph—and no additional space below. The text that follows the heading begins on the next line after the normal parskip. The heading is thus separated from the preceding section by one blank line and from its own section by one blank line, the same spacing as between any two paragraphs, the heading distinguished from body text solely by weight and case.

The headings are not numbered because the card is short enough that numbering is wayfinding apparatus for a building that has only one corridor. Where the document grows long enough that numbered sections become useful, they may be introduced, but the default is no numbers.

TITLE

The title is set flush left at fourteen points, which is approximately 1.75 times the body size, sufficient to be prominent without dominating the small page. Below the title, on the next line, a subtitle in bold at the body size. Below the

subtitle, after one parskip, the author name in bold. Below the author name, on the next line, the date in bold. The title block is thus four lines with no blank lines between consecutive elements except the one parskip between the subtitle and the author.

The title page bears no page number. The plain pagestyle is redefined to complete and utter emptiness, displaying no number and no mark of any kind whatsoever.

LINE SPACING
The line spacing is 1.15, achieved through the setspace package. This is tighter than the 1.5 of a manuscript but looser than the solid setting of a traditional book. On A6 where vertical space is scarce, wider leading would reduce the number of lines per page to an impractical degree, but solid setting would suffocate the monospace letterforms, which need more vertical air than proportional faces to remain legible. 1.15 is the compromise.

MICROTYPE
The microtype package is enabled in full, activating both optical margin alignment and font expansion. Even in a flush left setting, microtype

improves the texture of the text block by
permitting imperceptible adjustments to glyph
widths that reduce the frequency of hyphenation
and improve the evenness of color across the page.
Upon a measure this narrow, microtype is
compulsory, not elective.

HYPHENATION

Hyphenation follows the babel English patterns, or
the patterns of whatever language is loaded, with
a hyphenpenalty of three hundred, a tolerance of
twelve hundred, and an emergencystretch of one em.
The hyphenpenalty is set low enough to permit
hyphenation freely, which the narrow measure
demands, but not so low that every second line
breaks a word in twain. The tolerance is elevated
above the default to grant the engine room to
maneuver. The emergencystretch of one em serves as
a safety valve of last resort: rather than
producing an overfull box, TeX shall distribute up
to one em of additional stretch across the
offending line, which is sufficient to prevent the
occasional word from jutting beyond the margin
into the field.

When the text is composed in a language other than
English, the appropriate babel hyphenation package

for that language shall be installed and loaded, for the measure is narrow and good hyphenation is not a courtesy but a necessity. If and only if no hyphenation package exists for the language in question may this requirement be set aside.

WIDOW AND CLUB PENALTIES

The widow penalty and the club penalty are both set to ten thousand, which is the maximum the engine permits, so that no paragraph shall leave a single line stranded at the chief of any page nor at the base. A single stranded line is catastrophically visible upon a small page and is therefore not subject to negotiation or exception.

HEADERS AND FOOTERS

There is no content at the head. There is no rule at the head and no rule at the foot. The sole element of the apparatus is a centered page number at the base of each page, set at the footnote size. The page number is centered because a flush-left page number at the foot of a flush-left page would be invisible against the left margin of the text block above it.

WHAT THE CARD DOES NOT HAVE

The card has no drop cap. The drop cap signals the beginning of a narrative and the card does not narrate. The card has no section dividers, no ornaments, no fleurons of any kind. The heading performs the office of the section divider and no ornament is required. The card has no epigraph. The card has no centered elements of any kind except the page number at the foot.

COMPILATION

The card must be compiled with XeLaTeX and with XeLaTeX alone, on account of the fontspec dependency. The font JetBrains Mono must be installed upon the system in at least the Light, SemiBold, Light Italic, and SemiBold Italic weights. The compilation chain is xelatex invoked upon the filename, requiring no bibliography pass, no index pass, and no auxiliary passes of any kind. The card is self-contained and compiles in a single pass, and so it is blazoned.