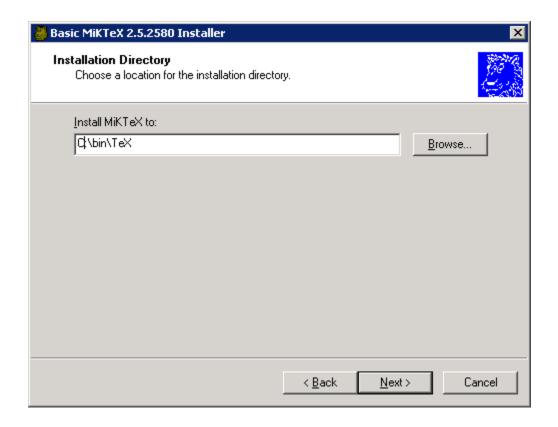# LaTeX for Windows

John D. Cook
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The foremost version of LaTeX for Windows is MiKTeX. This software is available for free from http://www.miktex.org. This document covers installing MiKTeX and some suggestions for how to use it, including some recommendations for LaTeX editors.
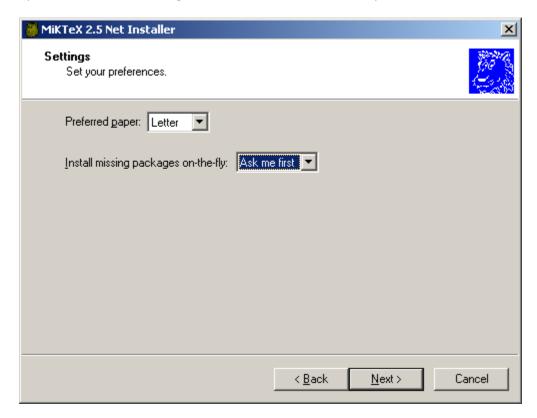
Installing MiKTeX

Download MiKTeX "basic" installer. No need to get the "full" installer: the full version is huge, and the basic version can very easily obtain extra packages as needed. Also, the installation is simpler with the basic installer.

At the time this document was written, the latest version was 2.5 and the installer name was basic-`miktex-2.5.2580.exe.`

I don't know whether it is necessary to install MiKTeX in a directory without spaces in the path, but it can't hurt. Even though MiKTeX is OK with paths containing spaces, other applications that might interact with MiKTeX may not be able to handled paths with spaces. Years ago it was necessary to avoid spaces in the install path and I've gotten in the habit of avoiding the problem.
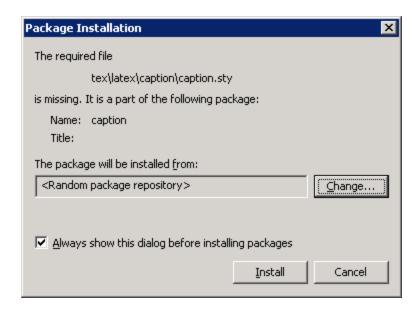
Americans will want to select "Letter" as the preferred paper. (MiKTeX comes from Europe and sets the European A4 size as the default.) You may want to select "yes" for automatic installation of missing packages. I prefer to see what's being installed, at least out of curiosity.

Once the installation is complete, MiKTeX will be automatically added to your path, so you can easily run it from a command line.
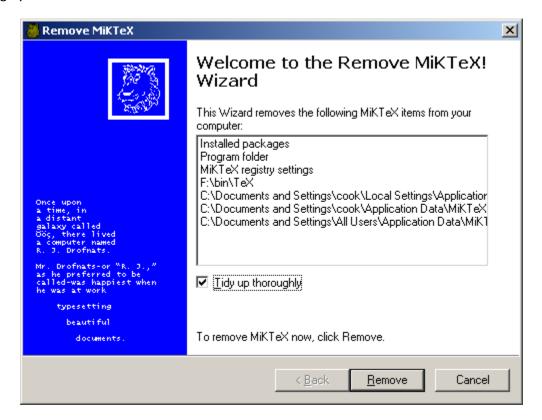
Installing packages

When MiKTeX comes across a reference to a file that is not installed, you will see a dialog like the following.

Just click the "Install" button. If you don't want to see what packages are being installed, unclick the checkbox at the bottom of the dialog. Usually when MiKTeX needs to install a package, it will pick up where it left off once the install is done. However, it may be necessary to run MiKTeX again if it is not able to continue.

Uninstalling MiKTeX

Note that if you need to uninstall MiKTeX, it will not completely uninstall unless the "Tidy up thoroughly" box is checked.

LaTeX editors for Windows

Some people like to use emacs for all their file editing. While emacs has been ported to Windows, it still behaves like a Unix program, for better or for worse. Three native Windows options are WinEdt, TeXnic Center, and TextPad.

I use WinEdt (http://www.winedt.com/) for LaTeX editing. Some of the features of WinEdt include:

- Buttons common tasks: running (pdf)latex, previewing dvi or PDF files, etc.
- Syntax coloring for LaTeX keywords
- Misspelled English prose is automatically underlined in red, similar to the spell checking in Microsoft.
- Visual clues to help match parentheses, braces, and dollar signs.
- Option toolbar to let you insert the LaTeX code for special symbols by clicking on a visual representation.

TeXnic Center (http://www.texniccenter.org) is another alternative. I have not used it much myself, but I've heard good things about it, and it seems similar to WinEdt. WinEdt is inexpensive, but TeXnic Center is free.

TextPad (http://www.textpad.com/) is a general purpose text editor for Windows. It can provide syntax coloring specific to the type of file being edited: LaTeX, R, C++, HTML, etc. TextPad is not specialized to LaTeX, beyond syntax coloring, but it has the advantage of being customizable to many kinds of files.

Both WinEdt and TextPad have free trial versions available.

This document available at http://www.JohnDCook.com