

SETTING UP CONTEXT

RICHARD KOCH

ConTeXt is an alternate set of macros created by Hans Hagen in The Netherlands and used by him to publish textbooks for school children. It makes an abrupt departure from the macro style developed by $\text{\TeX}$ and $\text{\LaTeX}$. ConTeXt has been under active development for two decades and in turn inspired the creation of LuaTeX. For extensive details, see <https://wiki.contextgarden.net>. I will refer to this wiki site as *ConTeXt Garden*.

ConTeXt comes in three forms. First there is the traditional ConTeXt gradually developed and extended over the years, and meant to be typeset using LuaTeX. Recently the ConTeXt developers introduced a new self-contained distribution typeset by a special program named **luametateX**. Both the traditional and the new ConTeXt are in TeX Live 2026. Since ConTeXt is still under active development, the ConTeXt distribution in TeX Live is updated about once a month.

The Inactive ConTeXt folder in TeXShop contains two engine files, one for each version of ConTeXt:

```
ConTeXt.engine  
ConTeXt-TL.engine
```

1. SYNC $\text{\TeX}$ IN CONTEXT

SyncTeX is technology by Jerome Laurens; using it, a user can jump from a spot in the source file of a document to the corresponding spot in the output pdf file, and vice versa. Laurens provides code which generates a synctex file during typesetting. This code has been adopted by the authors of most current $\text{\TeX}$ typesetting engines. Laurens also provides C code for front end developers which can open this synctex file and provide the key information allowing them to sync from one window to another.

But Hans Hagen eventually rewrites everything for ConTeXt, and several years ago he replaced Laurens' code with his own version to generate the synctex file in ConTeXt. This was painful for me because Hagen used Lauren's original design of synctex and ignored a later modern version. So TeXShop had to include two versions of the C code for front end developers, one for all engines except ConTeXt and a second just for ConTeXt.

But a couple of years ago Hagen also wrote code to interpret the synctex file for ConTeXt users. This is a welcome improvement, which has been in recent versions of TeXShop. To use it, ConTeXt users must take two actions. First, near the top of the root source file of a project, they must include the line

```
% !TEX useConTeXtSyncParser
```

And second, users must add to the header section of the root ConTeXt source file the line

```
\setupsynctex[state=start,method=min]
```

These rules apply to all both versions of ConTeXt.

2. TYPESETTING THE TRADITIONAL CONTEX T IN TEX LIVE

Drag the engine **ConTeXt.engine** from the Inactive folder of engines in TeXShop to the active engine section `~/Library/TeXShop/Engines`. Use this engine to typeset. An easy way to do that is to include the following two magic lines at the top of the root source file for a project:

```
% !TEX TS-program = ConTeXt
% !TEX useConTeXtSyncParser
```

Add the line

```
\setupsynctex[state=start,method=min]
```

to the header of your ConTeXt source file.

3. TYPESETTING CONTEX T IN TEX LIVE USING LUAMETATEX

Drag the engine **ConTeXt-TL.engine** from the Inactive folder of engines in TeXShop to the active engine section `~/Library/TeXShop/Engines`. Use this engine to typeset. An easy way to do that is to include the following two magic lines at the top of the root source file for a project:

```
% !TEX TS-program = ConTeXt-TL
% !TEX useConTeXtSyncParser
```

Add the line

```
\setupsynctex[state=start,method=min]
```

to the header of your ConTeXt source file.

4. INSTALLING THE CONTEX T GARDEN VERSION

Until recently, active users downloaded the ConTeXt Garden version of ConTeXt on a regular basis, and TeXShop had a special engine for these users. Since the version of ConTeXt in TeX Live became obsolete as the year progressed, a special TeXShop command allowed users to switch to the ConTeXt Garden version when using ConTeXt.

Now that ConTeXt is updated monthly, those features are not longer needed.