The sharedline package*

Jacob Smullyan

v1.0, 2025/06/26

Abstract

The sharedline package provides a robust and flexible solution for typesetting shared lines in dramatic verse, such as in the plays of Shakespeare. It allows a single line of verse to be split across multiple speakers while maintaining perfect horizontal alignment, creating the visual effect of a single, continuous line of iambic pentameter.

Contents

1 Introduction

Typesetting dramatic verse presents a unique challenge: a single metrical line is often shared between two or more characters. Standard use of the `verse` environment breaks the visual continuity of the line. This package introduces two simple commands, `\shareline` and `\linefeed`, that work together to solve this problem elegantly.

The "starter" command, `\shareline`, typesets the first part of a shared line and saves its width. The "continuation" command, `\linefeed`, is then used for all subsequent parts. It typesets an optional introductory text (such as a speaker prompt) at the left margin, then indents the verse text so that it begins at the horizontal position where the previous segment ended. It then adds its own verse width to the running total, so a line can be split any number of times.

---

*This package is licensed under the LPPL v1.3c or later.

The package works naturally within the `verse` environment but does not depend on it. The user retains full control over line breaks, using \\, \\!, or other standard mechanisms.

2   Installation

To install the package, place the `sharedline.sty` file in a location where your TeX distribution can find it. For a local installation, this is typically in your `texmf` tree (e.g., `TEXMFHOME/tex/latex/sharedline/`). After moving the file, you may need to refresh your distribution's file database.

If you are using this `.dtx` file, you can extract the package by running the command: `tex sharedline.ins`

3   Usage

The package provides two commands. They work naturally within the `verse` environment but do not depend on it.

\shareline \shareline{⟨*full text*⟩}

Starts a shared line. The mandatory argument contains the entire first segment, including any speaker prompt. The command typesets its argument and saves its total horizontal width as the baseline for subsequent indentation. It does not add a line break; you must add one manually (e.g., with \\).

\linefeed \linefeed[⟨*intro*⟩]{⟨*verse*⟩}

Continues a shared line. Used for all subsequent parts (second, third, etc.).

- [⟨*intro*⟩]: Optional introductory text (e.g., a speaker prompt), typeset at the left margin.

- {⟨*verse*⟩}: The verse text for this segment, indented so that it begins at the horizontal position where the previous segment ended.

After typesetting, the width of the verse text (not the intro) is added to the running total, so that subsequent \linefeed calls indent further. Like \shareline, this command does not add a line break.

3.1   Example: A Two-Way Split

```
\begin{verse}
  \shareline{ANNE: I would I knew thy heart.}\\
  \linefeed[GLOUCESTER: ]{'Tis figured in my tongue.}\\
\end{verse}
```

3.2   Example: A Three-Way Split

Notice that \linefeed is used for both the second and third parts. A manual line break is required after each segment except the last.

```
\begin{verse}
  \shareline{GUARD 1: Who goes there?}\\
```

```
    \linefeed[GUARD 2: ]{Speak now, or I swear}\\
    \linefeed[GUARD 1: ]{I'll shoot!}\\
 \end{verse}
```

3.3   Example: Without Speaker Prompts

The syntax remains clean when no prompts are needed. Simply omit the optional
argument for \linefeed.

```
 \begin{verse}
    \shareline{A path of dust and dreams beneath the sun,}\\
    \linefeed{a journey to a star.}\\
 \end{verse}
```

4   Implementation

We begin by identifying the package and its dependencies.

```
 1 ⟨∗package⟩
 2 \ProvidesPackage{sharedline}[2025/06/26 v1.0]
 3
 4 \RequirePackage{xparse}
```

We use a number of internal lengths and saveboxes. To prevent clashes with user-
defined macros or other packages, we use the @ symbol in their names and wrap
the definitions in \makeatletter and \makeatother. The prefix sl@ is used for
"sharedline".

```
 5 \makeatletter
 6
 7 \newsavebox{\sl@linebox}
 8 \newlength{\sl@linelength}
 9 \newsavebox{\sl@subtractbox}
10 \newsavebox{\sl@addbox}
```

\shareline The starter command. It takes a single mandatory argument containing the full
text of the first segment, including any speaker prompt. It places the argument
into a box to measure its width, saves this width globally into \sl@linelength,
and typesets the argument.

```
11 \NewDocumentCommand{\shareline}{m}{%
12    \sbox{\sl@linebox}{#1}%
13    \global\settowidth{\sl@linelength}{\usebox{\sl@linebox}}%
14    #1%
15 }
```

\linefeed The continuation command, used for all subsequent parts of a shared line. It takes
an optional intro and a mandatory verse segment. It measures the intro width,
typesets the intro, inserts a horizontal space equal to the accumulated length minus
the intro width, typesets the verse, and adds the verse width to the running total.

```
16 \NewDocumentCommand{\linefeed}{O{} m}{%
17   \sbox{\sl@subtractbox}{#1}%
18   #1%
19   \hspace*{\dimexpr\sl@linelength - \wd\sl@subtractbox\relax}%
20   #2%
21   \sbox{\sl@addbox}{#2}%
22   \global\addtolength{\sl@linelength}{\wd\sl@addbox}%
23 }
24
25 \makeatother
26
27 \endinput
```

</package>

Change History

v1.0
    General: Initial release 1

Index

Numbers written in italic refer to the page where the corresponding entry is described; numbers underlined refer to the code line of the definition; numbers in roman refer to the code lines where the entry is used.