

The tikzlings package

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Abstract

The *TikZlings* package provides a selection of cute little animals (and other beings) which can be used in *TikZ*. The following article will give an overview of the available creatures, their options and how to customise them.

1 Introduction

For most users their first contact with \LaTeX and friends is for something serious like writing a thesis or a report. However the \LaTeX world has much more to offer. There are many enthusiastic users and authors for whom \LaTeX is also a tool to create joyous documents like greeting cards or educational material for children.

The *TikZlings* package is a collection of cute little creatures which can be used with *TikZ* in many different situations. Figure 1 shows a family portrait of all of them.



Figure 1: Family portrait of the *TikZlings*.

2 Basic usage

The basic usage of the package is simple. After loading the package with `\usepackage{tikzlings}`, a command for each creature is available, which can be used in a `tikzpicture`:

```
\documentclass{standalone}
\usepackage{tikzlings}

\begin{document}
\begin{tikzpicture}
  \penguin
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{document}
```



Besides the `\penguin` from the example above, the other available macros are `\anteater`, `\bat`, `\bear`, `\bee`, `\bug`, `\cat`, `\chicken`, `\coati`, `\elephant`, `\hippo`, `\koala`, `\marmot`, `\mouse`, `\moles`, `\owl`, `\panda`, `\pig`, `\rhino`, `\sheep`, `\sloth`, `\snowman` and `\squirrel`. And for the undecided, there is the macro `\tikzling`, which will draw a random *TikZling*.

If for any reason, a users does not want to load the full *TikZlings* package, there are also individual packages for all animals, which can be loaded via, e.g., `\usepackage{tikzlings-bears}`.

3 Options

To make them more individual, the *TikZlings* come with several options for customisation. Via a simple key-value interface the user can adapt properties like the body colour:

```
\begin{tikzpicture}
  \bee[body=cyan]
\end{tikzpicture}
```



There are also options to make the *TikZlings* appear three-dimensional (3D), only show their outlines (`contour`) or from behind (`back`):



The available options vary for the different creatures and giving an exhaustive list here would exceed the scope of this article, but a full list of all options can be found in the documentation [1].

Besides these options provided by the *TikZlings* package, also all typical *TikZ* options can be used:

```
\begin{tikzpicture}
  \chicken[rotate=20]
\end{tikzpicture}
```



4 Accessories

The *TikZlings* come with an assortment of accessories, which can be used as an optional argument:

```
\begin{tikzpicture}
  \elephant[tophat]
\end{tikzpicture}
```



As the *TikZlings* come in many different shapes and sizes, not all accessories will fit them off-the-peg. Therefore accessories can also be added separately with the `\thing` macro, for which one can use all the typical *TikZ* options to scale and shift it until it fits the *TikZling*.

```
\begin{tikzpicture}
  \squirrel
  \thing[harlequin,
    scale=0.65,yshift=1.05cm
  ]
\end{tikzpicture}
```



For a full list of available accessories, please consult the package documentation [1].

5 Further customisation

Everybody for whom all these options and accessories are not enough, can further customise the TikZlings. At their heart, they are just paths in a `tikzpicture` so any TikZ code can be added:

```
\begin{tikzpicture}
\bug
\fill[blue] (0,0)
  rectangle (1,1);
\end{tikzpicture}
```



To make such additions easier, the TikZlings package provides several hooks for the user to add code at different layers of the drawing. For example one can use the `\mousehookbelly` macro to give the mouse a dress, which will be located between the belly and the arms:

```
\begin{tikzpicture}
\newcommand{\mousehookbelly}{%
  \fill[red!80!black]
    (0.55, 1.35) -- (0.65, 0.3) --
    (-0.65, 0.3) -- (-0.55, 1.35)
    -- (0.0, 0.9) -- cycle;
}
\mouse
\end{tikzpicture}
```



Other available hooks are

- `\langle tikzling \rangle hookbody`
- `\langle tikzling \rangle hookbackground`
- `\langle tikzling \rangle hookforeground`

6 Suggestions or problems

The package source is hosted at <https://github.com/samcarter/tikzlings>, along with a tracker for bug reports, feature requests or contributions.

7 Acknowledgements

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My thanks also to all the people who have contributed code or ideas to the package—without their valuable help, the TikZlings package would be nothing like it is today!

References

- [1] samcarter. *The TikZlings package — Version 0.8*, 2021. ctan.org/pkg/tikzlings.

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