Mathalignment support has been recently added into ConTeXt. This document is an attempt to explain the usage of \startalign and \startmathalignment. It also explains the features of \startmathmatrix and \startmathcases. Examples are used to illustrate how to use various options.
1 Introduction

\texttt{\startalign} and \texttt{\startmathalignment} macros provides an easy and elegant way to type multiline equations. As the names suggest, they are designed for aligned equations. This document is a summary of their various configurable features and provides examples of different usages. Both \texttt{\startalign} and \texttt{\startmathalignment} can be used interchangeably. \texttt{\startalign} follows the naming convention of \texttt{AMS-T\TeX} while \texttt{\startmathalignment} is named according the Con\TeXt naming conventions. In this document, I will use \texttt{\startalign}; primarily because it uses less typing.

2 Simple Alignment

By default, \texttt{\startalign} provides two columns, the first is right aligned and the second is left aligned. This is useful when one wants to align equations at \texttt{=} sign.

\begin{verbatim}
\startformula \startalign
  \NC a_1 x + b_1 y \NC = c_1 \NR
  \NC a_2 x + b_2 y \NC = c_2 \NR
\stopalign \stopformula
\end{verbatim}

\begin{align*}
a_1 x + b_1 y &= c_1 \\
a_2 x + b_2 y &= c_2
\end{align*}

Let's look at how this is working. The \texttt{\startformula} starts the Con\TeXt display mode, \texttt{\startalign} moves to the multiline display mode. \texttt{\NC} starts a New Column and \texttt{\NR} starts a New Row. By default, there are only two columns, first aligned right and the second left. There can be arbitrary number of rows.

It is possible to increase the number of columns and their alignment.

2.1 Increasing the number of columns

The number of columns can be increased by passing the option \texttt{n=<cols>} to \texttt{\startalign}, where \texttt{<col>} specifies the number of desired columns. By default, all new columns are left aligned.

\begin{verbatim}
\startformula \startalign[n=3]
  \NC a_1 x + b_1 y \NC = c_1 \NC = d_1 u + e_1 v \NR
  \NC a_2 x + b_2 y \NC = c_2 + c_3 \NC = d_2 u + e_2 v + f_1 w \NR
\stopalign \stopformula
\end{verbatim}

\begin{align*}
a_1 x + b_1 y &= c_1 = d_1 u + e_1 v \\
a_2 x + b_2 y &= c_2 + c_3 = d_2 u + e_2 v + f_1 w
\end{align*}
2.2 Modifying Column Alignment

The default column alignment is right, left, left, ... This can be changed by using the option align= to \startalign. This option accepts a comma separated list of entries, each of which is right, left or middle. For example, to get the second column to be middle aligned, we can specify \[n=3, align={right,middle,left}\].

\startformula \startalign[n=3, align={right,middle,left}]
\NC a_1 x + b_1 y \NC = c_1 \NC = d_1 u + e_1 v \NR
\NC a_2 x + b_2 y \NC = c_2 + c_3 \NC = d_2 u + e_2 v + f_1 w \NR
\stopalign \stopformula

\begin{align*}
a_1 x + b_1 y &= c_1 = d_1 u + e_1 v \\
a_2 x + b_2 y &= c_2 + c_3 = d_2 u + e_2 v + f_1 w
\end{align*}

Oops, this doesn’t look too good. We need to specify each = sign as a separate column.

\startformula \startalign[n=4, align={right,middle,middle,left}]
\NC a_1 x + b_1 y \NC = \NC c_1 \NC = d_1 u + e_1 v \NR
\NC a_2 x + b_2 y \NC = \NC c_2 + c_3 \NC = d_2 u + e_2 v + f_1 w \NR
\stopalign \stopformula

\begin{align*}
a_1 x + b_1 y &= c_1 = d_1 u + e_1 v \\
a_2 x + b_2 y &= c_2 + c_3 = d_2 u + e_2 v + f_1 w
\end{align*}

A useful application to change the default alignment is writing a short description on the left. For example

\startformula \startalign[n=3, align={left,right,left}]
\NC 12(x-1) + 20(y-3) + 14(z-2) \NC = 0 \NR
\NC \text{which is same as } \qquad 6x + 10y + 7z \NC = 0 \NR
\stopalign \stopformula

\begin{align*}
12(x-1) + 20(y-3) + 14(z-2) &= 0 \\
\text{which is same as} & \quad 6x + 10y + 7z = 0
\end{align*}

See page 19 for a more elaborate way of adding descriptions (or comments) to equations.

3 Side by Side Aligns

Sometimes one wants more than one align placed side by side. ConTeXt provides two ways to achieve this. Let us call the number of aligns as pairs. The simplest way to specify more than one pair is pass an option \[m=<pairs>\] to \startalign, where <pairs> is the number of desired pairs.
Side by Side Aligns

\begin{align}
\begin{array}{l}
a_1 x + b_1 y = c_1 \\
a_2 x + b_2 y = c_2
\end{array}
\begin{array}{l}
d_1 u + e_1 v = f_1 \\
d_2 u + e_2 v = f_2
\end{array}
\end{align}

The distance between the pairs can be increased by the option \texttt{distance} of \texttt{startalign}.

\begin{align}
\begin{array}{l}
a_1 x + b_1 y = c_1 \\
a_2 x + b_2 y = c_2
\end{array}
\begin{array}{l}
d_1 u + e_1 v = f_1 \\
d_2 u + e_2 v = f_2
\end{array}
\end{align}

A combination of \texttt{[m=...,n=...]} can be used.

\begin{align}
\begin{array}{l}
a_1 x + b_1 y = c_1 \\
a_2 x + b_2 y = c_2
\end{array}
\begin{array}{l}
d_1 u + e_1 v = f_1 \\
d_2 u + e_2 v = f_2
\end{array}
\end{align}

Sometimes, one simply wants to display two separate set of equations side by side. For such applications the above pairs mode can be cumbersome to work with. There is another alternative in \texttt{startformulas}
Equation Numbering and Referring

More than two groups can also be placed.

\begin{align}
\begin{alignat}{3}
\NC a \ &= \ \NC b \\
\NC 2a \ &= \ \NC 2b
\end{alignat}
\end{align}

The system of equations need not have the same number of lines.

\begin{align}
\begin{alignat}{3}
\NC 2x + 3 \ &= \ 7 \\
\NC 2x \ &= \ 4 \\
\NC x \ &= \ 2
\end{alignat}
\end{align}

\begin{align}
\begin{alignat}{3}
\NC x^2 + 2x \ &= \ 3 \\
2x + 3 \ &= \ 7 \\
2x \ &= \ 4 \\
x \ &= \ 2
\end{alignat}
\end{align}

\begin{align}
\begin{alignat}{3}
\NC x^2 + (3 - 1)x - 3 \ &= \ 0 \\
x(x + 3) - 1(x + 3) \ &= \ 0 \\
(x + 3)(x - 1) \ &= \ 0
\end{alignat}
\end{align}

\begin{align}
\begin{alignat}{3}
x \ &= \ -3 \text{ or } 1
\end{alignat}
\end{align}

4 Equation Numbering and Referring

To number multiline displays, two things need to be done. Write \texttt{\placeformula} before \texttt{\startformula} to start up equation numbering. To actually number the equations, you need to type [+] with each \NR.

\begin{align}
\begin{alignat}{3}
\NC a_1 \ x + b_1 \ y \ &= \ c_1 \\
\NC a_2 \ x + b_2 \ y \ &= \ c_2
\end{alignat}
\end{align}
Equation Numbering and Referring

\begin{align}
  a_1 x + b_1 y &= c_1 \\
  a_2 x + b_2 y &= c_2
\end{align}

This numbering mechanism provides a lot of flexibility. If we want to number only some specific equations, add \([+]\) to only those equations. Suppose in the above example, we want to only number the second equation.

\begin{verbatim}
\placeformula
\startformula \startalign
  \NC a_1 x + b_1 y \NC = c_1 \\
  \NC a_2 x + b_2 y \NC = c_2 \[+]
\stopalign \stopformula
\end{verbatim}

\begin{align}
  a_1 x + b_1 y &= c_1 \\
  a_2 x + b_2 y &= c_2
\end{align}

Some more examples . . .

\begin{verbatim}
\placeformula
\startformula \startalign[n=3, align={right,middle,left}]
  \NC a_1 x + b_1 y \NC = c_1 \NC = d_1 u + e_1 v \\
  \NC a_2 x + b_2 y \NC = c_2 \NC = d_2 u + e_2 v + f_1 w \[+]
\stopalign \stopformula
\end{verbatim}

\begin{align}
  a_1 x + b_1 y &= c_1 \quad d_1 u + e_1 v = f_1 \\
  a_2 x + b_2 y &= c_2 \quad d_2 u + e_2 v = f_2
\end{align}

While specifying number of pairs by \(m=<\text{pairs}>\), it is not possible to number each pair. \texttt{\startformulas} makes it easy to number equations from all pairs.

\begin{verbatim}
\placeformula
\startformula \startalign[m=2]
  \NC a_1 x + b_1 y \NC = c_1 \NC d_1 u + e_1 v \NC = f_1 \\
  \NC a_2 x + b_2 y \NC = c_2 \NC d_2 u + e_2 v \NC = f_2 \[+]
\stopalign \stopformula
\end{verbatim}

\begin{align}
  a_1 x + b_1 y &= c_1 \quad d_1 u + e_1 v = f_1 \\
  a_2 x + b_2 y &= c_2 \quad d_2 u + e_2 v = f_2
\end{align}

\begin{verbatim}
\placeformula
\startformula \startformulas
  \NC a_1 x + b_1 y \NC = c_1 \[+] \\
  \NC a_2 x + b_2 y \NC = c_2 \[+] \\
\stopalign \stopformula
\end{verbatim}

\begin{verbatim}
\placeformula
\startformula \startformulas
  \NC d_1 u + e_1 v \NC = f_1 \[+] \\
  \NC d_2 u + e_2 v \NC = f_2 \[+] \\
\stopalign \stopformula
\end{verbatim}
Equation Numbering and Referring

\[ a_1 x + b_1 y = c_1 \] \hspace{1cm} \[ a_1 u + e_1 v = f_1 \] \hspace{1cm} (6)

\[ a_2 x + b_2 y = c_2 \] \hspace{1cm} \[ d_2 u + e_2 v = f_2 \] \hspace{1cm} (7)

4.1 Referencing Numbered Alignments

There is no fun numbering equations if you can not refer to it. Well, referencing an equation is easy. Instead of the [+], you can specify [eq: tag] and then refer to the equation using \in[eq: tag]. For example,

\[ \begin{align} a_1 x + b_1 y &= c_1 \tag{1} \\ a_2 x + b_2 y &= c_2 \tag{2} \end{align} \]

As seen from (1) and (2), referring equations is straightforward.

\[ a_1 x + b_1 y = c_1 \] \hspace{1cm} (8)
\[ a_2 x + b_2 y = c_2 \] \hspace{1cm} (9)

As seen from (8) and (9), referring equations is straightforward.

Note that you need to put the tag with the \NR and not with \placeformula (as is done with single line equations).

4.2 Numbering subformula

To get subformula numbering for any equation in the alignment, use \placesubformula and pass the letter for the subformula to \NR[eq: tag][subformula letter].

\[ \begin{align} a_1 x + b_1 y &= c_1 \tag{c} \\ a_2 x + b_2 y &= c_2 \tag{d} \end{align} \]

As seen from (c) and (d), referring equations is straightforward.

The subformulas can be referred to by using a tag instead of +.
Equation Numbering and Referring

\begin{align}
  a_1 x + b_1 y &= c_1 \\
  a_2 x + b_2 y &= c_2 
\end{align}

(9c) and (9d) form a linear system of equations.

Notice that the formula number did not increase. This allows for using the same
formula–number for separate subformulas. If you want to increment the formula
number with the next set of subformulas, an explicit \texttt{\textbackslash increment[formula]} needs
to be given.

\begin{align}
  a_1 x + b_1 y &= c_1 \\
  a_2 x + b_2 y &= c_2 
\end{align}

If this kind of numbering is needed often, one can define a \texttt{\textbackslash placesubformulawithnumber} (or something with a shorter name)

\begin{align}
  a_1 x + b_1 y &= c_1 \\
  a_2 x + b_2 y &= c_2 
\end{align}

This definition also allows referring to the main formula as well as the subequations.

% Define div and rot operators
\begin{align}
  \diver s &= \nabla \times \mathbf{E} \\
  \rot s &= \nabla \times \mathbf{B} 
\end{align}
Equation Numbering and Referring

\startalign
   \NC \div \vec{E} \NC = \epsilon_{0}^{-1} \rho \NR \[eqn1:A]\[a]
   \NC \rot \vec{E} \NC = 0 \NR \[eqn1:B]\[b]
\stopalign

See (\in[eqn1]) for the static Maxwell equations, where we are going to examine (\in[eqn1:A]) a bit further . . .

A mixed style of formula and subformula numbers is possible.

\startalign
   \NC c^2 = a^2 + b^2 \NR [+][a]
   \NC a^2 + b^2 = c^2 \NR [+][b]
\incrementnumber\[formula]\stopalign

\NC d^2 = e^2 \NNR
\stopalign
\stopformula

\NC c^2 = a^2 + b^2 \quad (13a)
\NC a^2 + b^2 = c^2 \quad (13b)
\NC d^2 = e^2 \quad (14)

You can avoid typing a \incrementnumber each time by defining your own command.

\def\NNR{\incrementnumber[formula]\NR} %Numbered NR

\startalign
   \NC c^2 = a^2 + b^2 \[a]
   \NC a^2 + b^2 = c^2 \[b]
   \NC d^2 = e^2 \\NNR
\stopalign
\stopformula

\NC c^2 = a^2 + b^2 \quad (15a)
\NC a^2 + b^2 = c^2 \quad (15b)
\NC d^2 = c^2 \quad (16)
Suppose you want to number only a few equations by a subformula and have normal formula numbering for others, it can be achieved by

\begin{align*}
&c^2 = a^2 + b^2 \\
&a^2 + b^2 = c^2 \\
&d^2 = e^2
\end{align*}

(17a) \hspace{1cm} (17b) \hspace{1cm} (18)

5 \hspace{1cm} \textbf{Intertext}

Sometimes you want to place some text between two parts of math equations without disturbing equation alignment. Con\TeXt provides $\texttt{\textbackslash startintertext}$ environment to achieve this.

\begin{align*}
A_1 &= \left| \int_0^1 (x^2 - 3x) \, dx \right| + \left| \int_1^2 (x^2 - 5x + 6) \, dx \right| \\
&= \left| \frac{x^3}{3} - \frac{3}{2} x^2 \right|_0^1 + \left| \frac{x^3}{3} - \frac{7}{2} x^2 + 6x \right|_1^2 \\
&= \left| -\frac{7}{6} + \frac{14}{3} - \frac{23}{6} \right| = \frac{7}{6} + \frac{5}{6} = 2
\end{align*}

6 \hspace{1cm} \textbf{Aligned Matrices}

Con\TeXt provides $\texttt{\textbackslash startmatrix}$ for generic alignment mechanism.
Aligned Matrices

\begin{align}
\begin{pmatrix}
A & B & C \\
a & b & c \\
1 & 2 & 3
\end{pmatrix}
\end{align}

It can take a \texttt{left=} and \texttt{right=} option which can be used to typeset matrices

\begin{align}
I &= \begin{pmatrix}
\left( \begin{array}{ccc}
1 & 0 & 0 \\
0 & 1 & 0 \\
0 & 0 & 1 \\
\end{array} \right)
\end{pmatrix}
\end{align}

It is possible to \texttt{definemathmatrix} to use the construct repeatedly.

% Paranthesis
\begin{align}
\texttt{definemathmatrix}
\begin{pmatrix}
\left( \begin{array}{ccc}
1 & 0 & 0 \\
0 & 1 & 0 \\
0 & 0 & 1 \\
\end{array} \right)
\end{pmatrix}
\end{align}

% Brackets
\begin{align}
\texttt{definemathmatrix}
\begin{bmatrix}
\left[ \begin{array}{ccc}
1 & 0 & 0 \\
0 & 1 & 0 \\
0 & 0 & 1 \\
\end{array} \right]
\end{bmatrix}
\end{align}

% Curly braces
\begin{align}
\texttt{definemathmatrix}
\begin{Bmatrix}
\left\{ \begin{array}{ccc}
1 & 0 & 0 \\
0 & 1 & 0 \\
0 & 0 & 1 \\
\end{array} \right\}
\end{Bmatrix}
\end{align}

% vertical bars
\begin{align}
\texttt{definemathmatrix}
\begin{vmatrix}
\left| \begin{array}{ccc}
1 & 0 & 0 \\
0 & 1 & 0 \\
0 & 0 & 1 \\
\end{array} \right|
\end{vmatrix}
\end{align}

% double vertical bars
\begin{align}
\texttt{definemathmatrix}
\begin{Vmatrix}
\left\| \begin{array}{ccc}
1 & 0 & 0 \\
0 & 1 & 0 \\
0 & 0 & 1 \\
\end{array} \right\|
\end{Vmatrix}
\end{align}
Aligned Matrices

\startformula
I = \pmatrix{
1 & 0 & 0 \\
0 & 1 & 0 \\
0 & 0 & 1 \\
}\eqn{n}
= \bmatrix{
1 & 0 & 0 \\
0 & 1 & 0 \\
0 & 0 & 1 \\
}\eqn{n}
= \Bmatrix{
1 & 0 & 0 \\
0 & 1 & 0 \\
0 & 0 & 1 \\
}\eqn{n}
\stopformula

\startformula
\vmatrix{a & b \\
c & d}\quad \Vmatrix{a & b \\
c & d}
\stopformula

It is possible to change the alignment of columns using \align= option.

\startformula
\text{Let } A = \pmatrix{[align={left,right}]}
1 & 2 \\
3 & -5
\stoppmatrix
\stopformula

Let \( A = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 2 \\ 3 & -5 \end{pmatrix} \)

Sometimes extra space is needed between rows. \noalign can be used to provide that space.

\usemodule[newmat] %Needed for \dfrac
\gdef\needspace{\noalign{\vskip .15\bodyfontsize}}
7 Aligned limits

Sometimes one wants to have multiple lines in the limit. \TeX provides \atop for multiple limits. \ConTeXt provides a more general purpose \startsubstack for this purpose.

\begin{verbatim}
\startformula
\sum_{\startsubstack
1 \le i \le p \\
1 \le j \le q \\
1 \le k \le r \stopsubstack}
a_{ij}b_{jk}c_{ki}
\stopformula
\end{verbatim}

7.1 Some other macros for limits

Sometimes, long limits take too much space, and the resulting expression does not look good.

\begin{verbatim}
\startformula
X = \sum_{1 \le i \le j \le n} X_{ij}
\stopformula
\end{verbatim}

For text mode, \TeX has \clap, \llap and \rlap macros that hide the width of the box. Similar macros for math mode can be defined (Herbert Voss’ solution)
Aligned limits

\begin{align}
X &= \sum_{1 \leq i \leq j \leq n} X_{ij}
\end{align}

7.2 Smashing Limits

Having stacked limits in parenthesis causes problems.

\begin{align}
P &= \left( \sum_{\begin{substack}
1 \leq i \leq p \\
1 \leq j \leq q \\
1 \leq k \leq r
\end{substack}} a_{ij}b_{jk}c_{ki} \right)
\end{align}

One way to get the right size for the parenthesis is to \texttt{\smash} them.

\begin{align}
P &= \left( \vphantom{\sum_{\begin{substack}
1 \leq i \leq p \\
1 \leq j \leq q \\
1 \leq k \leq r
\end{substack}}} \smash{\sum_{\begin{substack}
1 \leq i \leq p \\
1 \leq j \leq q \\
1 \leq k \leq r
\end{substack}}} a_{ij}b_{jk}c_{ki} \right)
\end{align}
Cases

\[ P = \left( \sum_{1 \leq j \leq q} a_{ij} b_{jk} c_{ki} \right) \]

In general if you do not want sub or super-scripts to contribute to the height of the \( \left \right \) parenthesis, you can \smash them. Let's define a macro \opsmash that does this.

\begin{verbatim}
\def\opsmash#1{\doopsmash#1\stopdosmash\smash[td]{#1}}
\def\stopdosmash{}
\def\doopsmash#1#2\stopdosmash{\vphantom{#1}}
% #1 is the operator, #2 the limits
\end{verbatim}

\begin{verbatim}
\startformula
\text{original} \quad \left( 1 + {\prod_{i = 1}^n } p_i \right)^2 \quad \text{vs smashed} \quad \left( 1 + \opsmash{\prod_{i = 1}^n } p_i \right)^2 \stopformula
\end{verbatim}

\begin{verbatim}
\startformula
f(x) = \startcases
\NC x \MC 0 \leq x < 1 \NR
\NC 1 - x \MC 1 \leq x < 2 \NR
\NC 0 \MC \text{otherwise} \NR
\stopcases\stopformula
\end{verbatim}

\begin{verbatim}
\def\startformula
f(x) = \{ \begin{array}{ll}
x & 0 \leq x < 1 \\
1 - x & 1 \leq x < 2 \\
0 & \text{otherwise}
\end{array} \stopformula
\end{verbatim}

This consists of two columns with a big brace on the left. There are two ways of specifying the second column — \MC (Math Column) and \NC (New Column). If \MC is used, the second column is in \math mode, with \NC it is in ‘text mode’.

The bracket on the left can be configured by passing an argument to startcases.
Cases

\[ f(x) = \begin{align*} 
  x & \quad 0 \leq x < 1 \\
  1-x & \quad 1 \leq x < 2 \\
  0 & \quad \text{otherwise} 
\end{align*} \]

The distance between the two columns can be changed using the `distance` option.

\[ f(x) = \begin{align*} 
  x & \quad 0 \leq x < 1 \\
  1-x & \quad 1 \leq x < 2 \\
  0 & \quad \text{otherwise} 
\end{align*} \]

8.1 Numbered Cases

Sometimes, each of the rows of the case need to be numbered. This can be done by adding `\NR[#]` or `\NR[eq:label]`. The distance between the case environment and the number is controlled by `numberdistance`.

\[ f(x) = \begin{align*} 
  x & \quad 0 \leq x < 1 \\
  1-x & \quad 1 \leq x < 2 \\
  0 & \quad \text{otherwise} 
\end{align*} \]

(8) shows that \( f(x) \) is linear increasing between 0 and 1 and (9) shows that it is linear decreasing between 1 and 2.

It is possible to give subformula numbers to each subcase. (We will reuse \place-subformulawithnumber defined page 7)
Cases

\[ f(x) = \begin{cases} 
  x & 0 \leq x < 1 \\
  1 - x & 1 \leq x < 2 \\
  0 & \text{otherwise} 
\end{cases} \]

Consider $f(x)$ as defined in (23). (23a) shows that $f(x)$ is linear increasing between 0 and 1 and (23b) shows that it is linear decreasing between 1 and 2.

If a number for all the cases in not required, the case construct can be hidden using \startalign

\[ \begin{align*} 
  f(x) &= \begin{cases} 
    x & 0 \leq x < 1 \\
    1 - x & 1 \leq x < 2 \\
    0 & \text{otherwise} 
  \end{cases} 
\end{align*} \]

Consider $f(x)$ as defined in (24). (24a) shows that $f(x)$ is linear increasing between 0 and 1 and (24b) shows that it is linear decreasing between 1 and 2.

8.2 Display cases

Each row in the \startcases environment is set in inline math mode. Consider, for example,

\[ a = \begin{cases} 
  E = mc^2 & \text{nothing interesting to see here} \\
  \int_0^1 x - 3 \, dx & \text{Integral is in text mode} 
\end{cases} \]
You can use `style=\displaystyle` option to make things come out in display mode.

\begin{align}
\begin{cases}
E &= mc^2 \\
\int_0^1 x - 3 \, dx
\end{cases}
\end{align}

9 Some Advanced Tips

9.1 Defining amsmath like commands

amsmath package for LaTeX defines some useful multiline display environments like `split` and `gather`. It is easy to replicate these features with the alignment mechanism of context.

Consider the split environment, where only the last equation is numbered. Notice that to get the numbering correct, the last line should not end with a `\NR`.

\begin{align}
f(x) &= (x+2)^2 + 2(x+2) + 3 \\
&= x^2 + 4x + 4 + 2x + 4 + 3 \\
&= x^2 + 6x + 11
\end{align}

If you want only the last line of the equation to be numbered, it is simpler to use `\startalign` and just number the last line using `\[+]` or `\eq:tag` with the last `\NR`. If you want the equation number to be present in the center of the display, see the definition in section 9.4.

We can also define a `gather` environment. This environment centers all the lines.
Some Advanced Tips

\begin{align*}
(a+b)^2 &= a^2 + 2ab + b^2 \\
(a+b)^3 &= a^3 + 3ab(a+b) + b^3
\end{align*}

Suppose, we want the equations to be left aligned. We can define a \texttt{lgather} environment to achieve this.

\begin{align*}
(a+b)^2 &= a^2 + 2ab + b^2 \\
(a+b)^3 &= a^3 + 3ab(a+b) + b^3
\end{align*}

For multi-pair alignments, it is possible to have spread out alignments, similar to \texttt{flalign} environment of \texttt{amsmath}.

\begin{align*}
&i_{11} = 0.25 & i_{12} = i_{21} & i_{13} = i_{23} \\
&i_{21} = \frac{1}{3} i_{11} & i_{22} = 0.5i_{12} & i_{23} = i_{31} \\
&i_{31} = 0.33i_{22} & i_{32} = 0.15i_{32} & i_{33} = i_{11}
\end{align*}

This environment can be used to mix left and middle align equations, without changing system wide \texttt{setupformulas}. 
Some Advanced Tips

\begin{align}
\int \frac{1}{x^2} \, dx
\end{align}

Another usage is writing a description on the left. (Compare from an example given on page 2 and section 9.2.)

\begin{align}
12(x-1) + 20(y-3) + 14(z-2) = 0
\quad \text{which is same as}
6x + 10y + 7z = 0
\end{align}

9.2 Writing explanations with aligned equations

Sometimes one wants to write an explanation with each step of an equation.

\begin{align}
2x + 3 = 5 & \quad \text{Add -3 to both sides} \\
2x + 3 - 3 = 5 - 3 & \quad \text{Simplify} \\
2x = 2 & \quad \text{Divide both sides by 2}
\end{align}
Some Advanced Tips

If one simple wants to add comments to left aligned equations then one can use

\begin{doleftcomments}
\Comment Add -3 to both sides
2x + 3 - 3 = 5 - 3
\Comment Simplify
2x = 2
\Comment Divide both sides by 2
x = 2
\end{doleftcomments}

9.3 aligned family of commands

amsmath also provides \texttt{aligned} and \texttt{gathered} commands, that can be used to group equations. It is easy to copy these commands using \texttt{startmathmatrix}. 

Some Advanced Tips

\definemathmatrix
\[aligned]\[n=2,distance=0pt,align={right,left},style=\textstyle]\\definemathmatrix
\[gathered]\[n=1,align=\text{middle},style=\textstyle]\\startformula
\frac{\left(\begin{array}{c}
xy + xy + xy \\
xy + xy + xy
\end{array}\right)}{z} = \frac{\left(\begin{array}{c}
xy + xy + xy \\
xy + xy + xy
\end{array}\right)}{z}\\stopformula
\frac{\left(\begin{array}{c}
xy + xy + xy \\
xy + xy + xy
\end{array}\right)}{z} = \frac{\left(\begin{array}{c}
xy + xy + xy \\
xy + xy + xy
\end{array}\right)}{z}
\]

The location=top|middle|bottom option of \definemathmatrix can be used alter the baseline of aligned and gathered stuff.

\definemathmatrix
dosplit
\[n=2,distance=0pt,align={right,left},style=\textstyle]\\startformula
\left(\begin{array}{c}
xy + xy + xy \\
xy + xy + xy
\end{array}\right) = \frac{\left(\begin{array}{c}
xy + xy + xy \\
xy + xy + xy
\end{array}\right)}{z} = \frac{\left(\begin{array}{c}
xy + xy + xy \\
xy + xy + xy
\end{array}\right)}{z}\\stopformula
\frac{\left(\begin{array}{c}
xy + xy + xy \\
xy + xy + xy
\end{array}\right)}{z} = \frac{\left(\begin{array}{c}
xy + xy + xy \\
xy + xy + xy
\end{array}\right)}{z}
\]

9.4 split (again)

mathmatrix can also be used to define a split environment, with equations number at the center of the display.
Using \startalign and friends

Some Problems

\%D Need to change domatrixNC to have a {} so that bin operators
\%D are treated properly
\def\startsplit#1\stopsplit{
  \def\dodomatrixNC
  \gdef\domatrixNC{\endmath&{}}
  \startdosplit#1\stopdosplit}

\placeformula \startformula \startsplit
  \NC f(x) \NC = (x+2)^2 + 2(x+2) + 3 \NR
  \NC \NC = x^2 + 4x + 4 + 2x + 4 + 3 \NR
  \NC \NC = x^2 + 6x + 11 \NR
\stopsplit \stopformula

The interline spacing is not perfect as the following example shows.

\placeformula \startformula \startsplit
  \NC f_{h,\varepsilon}(x,y)
  \NC = \varepsilon \bold{E}_{x,y} \int_0^{t_{\varepsilon}} L_{x,y_{\varepsilon}(\varepsilon u)}\varphi(x)\,du \NR
  \NC \NC = h\int L_{x,z}\varphi(x)\rho_x(dz) \NR
  \NC \NC \quad + h\biggl[\frac{1}{t_{\varepsilon}} \biggl(\bold{E}_{y} \int_0^{t_{\varepsilon}} L_{x,y^x(s)}\varphi(x)\,ds - t_{\varepsilon} \int L_{x,z}\varphi(x)\rho_x(dz)\biggr) \biggr]
  \NC \NC \phantom{{=}+h\biggl[} \quad + \frac{1}{t_{\varepsilon}} \biggl(\bold{E}_{y} \int_0^{t_{\varepsilon}} L_{x,y^x(s)}\varphi(x)\,ds - \bold{E}_{x,y} \int_0^{t_{\varepsilon}} L_{x,y_{\varepsilon}(\varepsilon s)}\varphi(x)\,ds\biggr) \biggr]
  \NC \NC = h\widehat{L}_x\varphi(x) + h\theta_{\varepsilon}(x,y), \NR
\stopsplit \stopformula

10 Some Problems

10.1 What happened to my square brackets?

\startformula \startgather
[p] = 100 \NR

Compatibility with \texttt{amsmath}

\begin{align*}
[v] &= 200 \\
\text{\texttt{\textbackslash stopgather \texttt{\textbackslash stopformula}}}
\end{align*}

This is not what you would expect. An easy way to avoid such unexpected behavior is to start each line with \texttt{\textbackslash NC}.

\begin{align*}
\text{\texttt{\textbackslash startformula \texttt{\textbackslash startgather}}}
\text{\texttt{\textbackslash NC}} [p] &= 100 \\
\text{\texttt{\textbackslash NC}} [v] &= 200 \\
\text{\texttt{\textbackslash stopgather \texttt{\textbackslash stopformula}}}
\end{align*}

\[ p = 100 \]
\[ v = 200 \]

\section{Compatibility with amsmath}

\texttt{\textbackslash startalign} provides a compatibility mode with \texttt{amsmath} syntax, which makes it easier to reuse work written in \LaTeX.

\begin{align*}
\text{\texttt{\textbackslash placeformula \texttt{\textbackslash startformula \texttt{\textbackslash startalign}}}}
f(x) &= x^3 + 2x^2 + 3 \\
f'(x) &= 3x^2 + 4x \\
\text{\texttt{\textbackslash stopalign \texttt{\textbackslash stopformula}}}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
f(x) &= x^3 + 2x^2 + 3 \quad (28) \\
f'(x) &= 3x^2 + 4x \quad (29)
\end{align*}

However, Hans does not like the syntax, especially the loose label for referring equations. This compatibility feature may disappear in the future. So, I suggest not to use it. There are subtle differences from the \texttt{amsmath} syntax, and it is much easier (and logical) to follow the \texttt{Con\TeX} syntax.

\section{Missing Features}

Somewhere between March and April, \texttt{\textbackslash startalign} lost the ability to break equations across pages. Hopefully, it will be added back soon.

As compared to \texttt{AMSTeX} and \texttt{amsmath} package of \LaTeX, the only display math environment missing from \texttt{Con\TeX} is \texttt{multline}. I do not completely understand what is the expected behavior of \texttt{multline} environment. If someone understands what it is supposed to do, and needs that feature, make a feature request :-).
Missing Features

The definitions of `aligned`, `gathered` and `split` here are not perfect. However they fit my needs :-) If you want proper support for these environments, ask on the mailing list.

Subformula numbering is a kludge. The subformula number needs to be specified manually. Using mixed formula and subformula number needs some user intervention. However, it is possible to make these transparent by defining your own macros.