Regular expressions Pattern matching syntax

Anchor ^ \b \A → **then** **Atom** a . \d [abc] (...) → **repeated by** **Quantifier** ? * + {n,m} → **joined by** **Alternation** a|b

CONCEPTS

A regex is matched left to right: at each position the engine tries the whole pattern and moves on if it fails.

Flavours differ. This sheet follows PCRE2 (Perl-style), also used by PHP and grep -P; JavaScript, Python and POSIX tools lack some features.

Prefer a specific class over .* : greedy wildcards cause surprising matches and slow backtracking.

CHARACTERS

`.`
Any char except newline

`\d  \w  \s`
Digit, word char, space

`[abc]`
Any one of a, b, c

`[^abc]`
Any char except a, b, c

`[a-z0-9]`
Ranges inside a set

`\.`
Escape a metacharacter

CHARACTERS (cont.)

`\n  \t  \r`
Newline, tab, carriage return

`\x41  \x{263A}`
Character by hex code

`[[:alpha:]]`
POSIX class inside a set

`\h  \v  \R`
Horizontal space, vertical space, any line break

`\Q...\E`
Treat text literally

`\p{L}  \p{Lu}`
Unicode letter, uppercase letter

QUANTIFIERS

`*`
Zero or more

`+`
One or more

`?`
Zero or one (optional)

`{n}`
Exactly n times

`{n,m}`
Between n and m times

`{n,}`
At least n times

`*?  +?  ??`
Lazy: as few as possible

QUANTIFIERS (cont.)

`*+  ++  ?+`
Possessive: never give back

ANCHORS

`^  $`
Start, end of line

`\b`
Word boundary

`\B`
Not a word boundary

`\A  \z`
Start, end of text

GROUPS

`(...)`
Capture group

`a|b`
Alternation

`(?:...)`
Group without capturing

`(?<name>...)`
Named capture group

`\1  \2`
Backreference to group n

`\k<name>`
Backreference by name

`(?>...)`
Atomic group

LOOKAROUND

`(?=...)`
Followed by (lookahead)

`(?!...)`
Not followed by

`(?<=...)`
Preceded by (lookbehind)

`(?<!...)`
Not preceded by

`\K`
Reset start of reported match

Zero-width checks

Syntax	Asserts
`(?=x)`	x comes next
`(?!x)`	x does not come next
`(?<=x)`	x comes before
`(?<!x)`	x does not come before

FLAGS

`(?i)`
Ignore case

`(?m)`
^ and $ match at each line

`(?s)`
Dot matches newline

`(?x)`
Free-spacing: ignore blanks, allow #comments

`(?i:...)`
Flag for one group only

FLAGS (cont.)

`(?-i)`
Turn a flag off

`(?U)`
Quantifiers lazy by default

`(*UCP)`
Make \d \w \s Unicode-aware

ADVANCED

`(?R)`
Recurse the whole pattern

`(?1)  (?&name)`
Call a group as a subroutine

RECIPES

Integer or decimal

```
^-?\d+(?:\.\d+)?$
```

ISO date with named parts

```
(?<y>\d{4})-(?<m>\d{2})-(?<d>\d{2})
```

Trim trailing whitespace

```
# match, replace with nothing
[ \t]+$   (with (?m))
```

Value after a key

```
# match only the number
price=\K\d+
# or with lookbehind
(?<=price=)\d+
```

Simple email (loose)

```
^[\w.+-]+@[\w-]+(?:\.[\w-]+)+$
```