This isn’t quite the simplest possible \LaTeX\ document:

\begin{document}
This isn’t quite the simplest \LaTeX\ document.

Now with \texttt{two} paragraphs!
\end{document}

It is supposed to illustrate a couple of key points, however:

• The document begins with a \texttt{documentclass} command, which tells how
the document will be formatted (with the \texttt{article} format),

• All of the text following \texttt{begin{document}} is shown in the document,

• In the document, \texttt{line breaks and extra spaces are ignored}, so that even though there was a line break between the words “the” and “simplest,” \LaTeX\ decided where to break the line to best fit the “page,”

• The exception to this is the two carriage returns between the paragraphs, which are interpreted as a paragraph break. In the \texttt{article} format, this prompts \LaTeX\ to indent the paragraphs,

• We use \texttt{macros} to control the typesetting of text. Some just insert text or
characters (\LaTeX), some have arguments, (\texttt{emph{emphasized text}}),
some have optional arguments, given with square brackets. And there are
macros which are like “switches,” but we’ll talk about those later, and

• Spaces are ignored after macros, so that to get a space trailing a macro we
include an explicit space by escaping it with a backslash (as in \LaTeX{}).

A couple of other notes about typing text in \LaTeX:\

• Spacing: Generally speaking, there’s no reason to muck with \LaTeX’s
choice of spacing. There are two possible exceptions to this. When a
line shouldn’t break on a space, use a \texttt{tie} (the tilde character “\~“): P. Gavin
LaRose is typed P.\~Gavin LaRose. And \LaTeX\ will put a longer space
following a period that isn’t preceded by a capital letter, which you don’t
always want—for Prof. LaRose, type \texttt{Prof.\ LaRose}.

• Hyphens: An en-dash is obtained with a double-hyphen: \texttt{--}. Thus, to
get pp. 1–7, type pp.\texttt{--}1--7. Similarly, an em-dash is a triple-hyphen—as
used here: we type \ldots\texttt{a triple-hyphen---as used here:}\ldots. And a
hyphen is a single-hyphen. Duh.

• Breaks: Generally speaking, don’t force line breaks. If you have to, use a
double-backslash (\texttt{\}). Force a page break with \texttt{\newpage}.