Starting Out:

Every \LaTeX document must have three commands in it. A Document-class command and a begin and end document commands.

\documentclass[12pt]{article}
\begin{document}
\end{document}

The documentclass command has two main parts. The portion between the square brackets are the options, which may be omitted. The portion between the curly brackets is the type of document to be created. Most of the time we will be creating articles. The option of 12pt makes the font size of the normal text 12 points high. This is just like setting a Word font size to 12. Descriptions of the document styles and the options are given on pages 8–9 of the on-line manual.

The area between the documentclass command and the begin document command is called the preamble. Commands that change the entire document appearance tend to go here, like margin settings, page numbering and package loading. We will do more with these types of commands in the near future.

Text:

Text in \LaTeX is easy. You simply write the text in the editor and when you compose the document \LaTeX automatically reformats the paragraphs and lines so that they look good. It even hyphenates for you automatically.

The only thing you need to remember is that extra spaces are removed and to begin a new paragraph you simply need to insert a blank line, \LaTeX will do the indenting for you.

Like this.

The above text was produced from the following text.
Text in \LaTeX{} is easy. You simply write the text in the editor and when you compose the document \LaTeX{} automatically reformats the paragraphs and lines so that they look good. It even hyphenates for you automatically.

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Like this.

As far as fonts and font sizes go you don’t have a lot of options. Frankly, you shouldn’t. \TeX{} was built for doing mathematics and you really don’t need 500 different fonts to write a mathematics article. The options you do have for font sizes and styles is given on page 65 of the on-line manual.

\textbf{Delimiters:}

A delimiter is a set of curly brackets, \{ and \}. Whatever is done inside the brackets does not affect the outside. For example,

This is a \{\textbf{\bf bold}\} word.

produces

This is a \textbf{bold} word.

and

This is a \textbf{\bf bold word}.

produces

This is a \textbf{bold word}.
Spacing:

There are several commands that allow you to add vertical and horizontal spacing. Of these, the ones I use the most are \vskip, \vspace and \hskip.

The syntax for the \vskip is \vskip length where the length is given as a number of standard units. Units used by \LaTeX are given on page 69 of the on-line manual. For example,

Line 1.  
\vskip 12pt  
Line 2.  

produces

Line 1.  
Line 2.  

The syntax for \vspace and \hspace are similar, \vspace{length} and \hspace{length}, where the length is given as a number of standard units. For example,

Line 1.  
\vspace{12pt}  
Line 2.  

produces

Line 1.  
Line 2.  

and

Line 1. \hspace{50pt} \Line 2.  

produces
Line 1. Line 2.

Note that the \vspace command should only be used between paragraphs and thus should have blank lines before and after the command. If you need to insert space between lines that do not start new paragraphs you should use \vskip.

More information about spacing can be found in the on-line manual.