

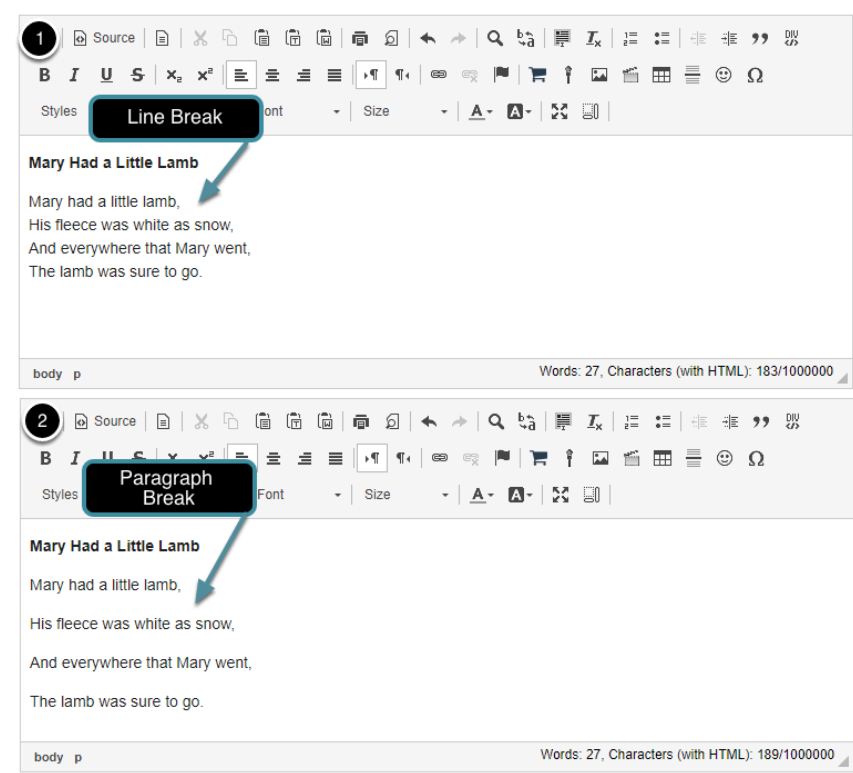
How paragraph breaks affect accessibility

A *paragraph break* (hitting **Enter** or **Return** on the keyboard) is always more meaningful than a *line break* (hitting **Shift + Enter** or **Return** on the keyboard). A *paragraph break* inserts what looks like a double-space between one line of text and another, and it allows screen reader users to parse the information on the page more readily.

Although programs like Microsoft Word have options to create single-spaced documents with paragraph breaks, web pages do not. You may find using a line break more aesthetically pleasing than a paragraph break, but line breaks can create problems for screen reader users.

While a screen reader can interpret a paragraph break as "blank," a line break may not be indicated to the user. The text on the new line may sound like a new sentence, instead of the start of a new paragraph.

Images with examples of paragraph and line breaks



1. The first image above depicts a poem, *Mary Had a Little Lamb*, where line breaks were used to separate each line.
2. In the second image, paragraph breaks separate the lines.

While the line breaks may "look better" for a visual reader, a screen reader user will hear the poem that is split up with line breaks as one contiguous sentence: "Mary had a little lamb, his fleece was white as snow, etc."