

## How to Set Type in a Composing Stick

When you set type, the first thing you need to determine is line length. Line length is based on the length of the longest line you'll set or the size of your page. You don't want to set and print a line that's longer than the width of your paper! There are no hard and fast rules about determining line length; sometimes it just takes trial and error to determine the best line length for your project.

To start, select the type you want to use, find the longest line of your text, and set it on a composing stick to determine its length. A composing stick is a handheld tool that's used for setting metal type. If the line is too long or too short, you may have to change your typeface or type size and set the line again. Once you've determined the best line length for your project, proceed as follows.

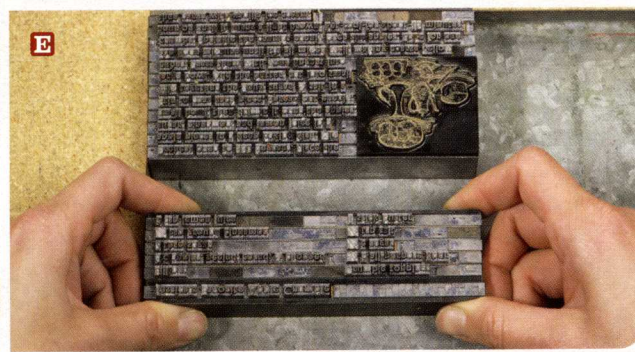
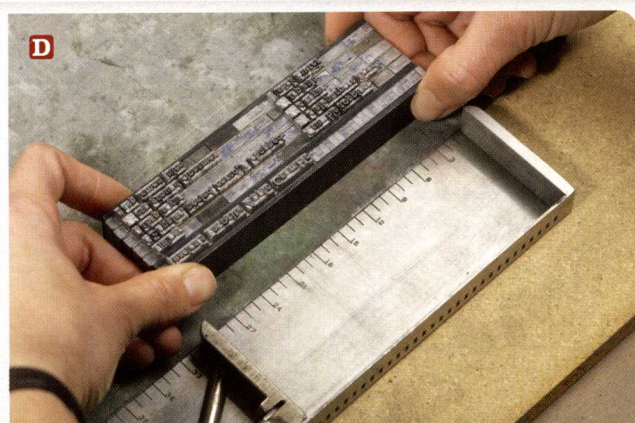
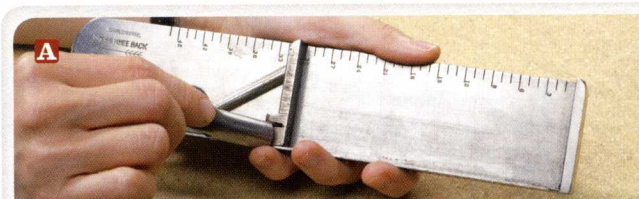
➔ **STEP 1** Set the composing stick to that length. On the composing stick, lift the clamp to release the knee (the adjustable arm), slide it along the stick to the correct measurement, fit the small row of projections into the corresponding slots, and clamp the knee down into place **A**.

➔ **STEP 2** Insert a slug of the same line length in the stick. Always start and end with a slug instead of thinner leading, because a slug's sturdiness will help hold the text block together when you move it from the stick. Place an em quad at both ends of the stick. I always start and end each line with em quads because they don't fall over like smaller spacers do when I'm moving a block of text around **B**.

➔ **STEP 3** Hold the composing stick in your left hand as shown in the photo. Set pieces of type one at a time from left to right, upside down, with the face of the type facing out. The nick should show across the top; use your left thumb to feel for the nick and to help slide each piece of type into place.

➔ **STEP 4** Use spacing material between each word. I prefer 3-to-the-em or 4-to-the-em.

➔ **STEP 5** When you're finished setting the line, use spacing to fill out the rest of the line length. The line will print left justified. To center justify a line, use the same amount of spacing on either side of the line. To fully justify a line, add more spaces between words.



➔ **STEP 6** Once you've filled out the extra space and the line is snug, you need to tighten it so that each line locks up and prints correctly. Add as many thins as you can and do the thumb test: push up on the line of type with your thumb. The entire line should start to lift up as one unit. If individual letters lift up, then the line isn't tight enough. Keep adding thins until the line passes the thumb test **C**.

➔ **STEP 7** Add leading on top of the line you've just set and continue setting each line. Once you've filled the composing stick halfway up, place a slug on top of the last line and slide the entire block onto a galley. Support the block of type by pressing the top and the bottom with your index fingers and thumbs. Press on the sides with your middle fingers. Pinch the block tight and slide it. Do not lift it **D**!

➔ **STEP 8** Slide the block of text to a corner where the walls of the galley will offer some support. Keep the top of the text at the top of the galley and use pieces of furniture on the other two sides to keep the type from falling over. Continue setting type on the composing stick and adding it to the type on the galley that's already set until you've set the entire block of text **E**. Replace slugs with the proper amount of leading between lines, but leave a slug on the top and bottom of the form.

## Proofing

Each line of type can be proofed as you set it by using a tabletop proofing press. Proofing each line makes it easier to make changes before completing an entire block of text. In addition to the press, you'll need a piece of carbon paper, a piece of scrap paper, and a strong magnet. Place your composing stick directly on the press bed. Use the magnet or some furniture to hold the type in place. Place the carbon paper on top of the type with the carbon side facing up. Place the scrap paper on top of the carbon paper and run the roller across the press. Voilà! You should have an instant image of how your line will look when printed. If you don't have carbon paper, this step can be done with printing ink and a brayer.

## How to Tie Up the Form

After you finish setting the type, you'll want to secure your block of text before moving it to be stored or locked up for printing. To tie up the form, you'll wrap it with a piece of string that should be tied with a small twist. You are (quite literally) tying up the form.

➔ **STEP 1** Place the loose end of a piece of string on the upper left corner of the form, leaving about a 4-inch (10.2-cm) "tail."

➔ **STEP 2** Wrap the string around the form four times, pulling the string nice and tight as you go around. Try to keep each strand placed flat against the form, directly above the previous strand **F**.

➔ **STEP 3** Holding the wrapped string tight with one hand, lift the tail up with the other hand and place it over the four wrapped strands **G**.

➔ **STEP 4** Using a brass or piece of leading, tuck the tail under the four wrapped strands and pull out the tail from underneath **H**.

➔ **STEP 5** Trim off the excess string and give both ends a slight tug. You should now be able to easily move the form around without worrying about pried type. Remember to slide the form. Don't lift it!

