

## 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.



