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Dave Campbell  
Editorial Content Chief, *WOOD* magazine



## Adobe Acrobat Reader Troubleshooting Guide

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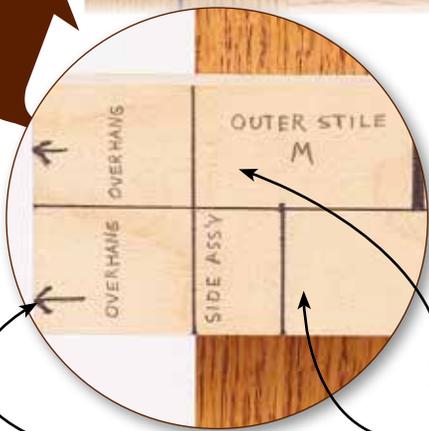
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# Measure Once, Cut Forever with a



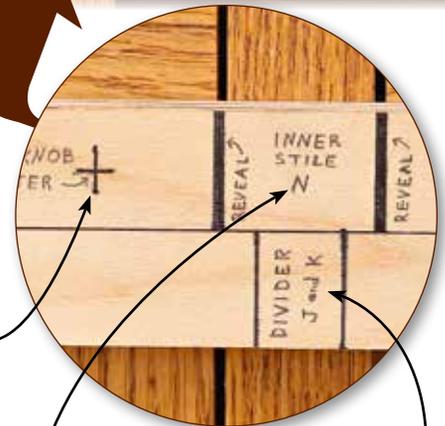
**Want to abolish measuring errors from your woodworking? Beat them with a stick: a story stick.**



Arrows mark the reference point.

Bottom row represents the carcass.

Top row represents the face frame, doors, and drawers.



Mark hardware centers.

Add part letters where appropriate.

Label parts in detail.

In woodworking, the tape measure is an unreliable intermediate step, at best. Burn an inch and forget to subtract it during markup, get interrupted after you measure, or mark with a different tape than you measured, and the errors pile up.

However, by directly transferring the layout to a story stick—a tool nearly as old as woodworking—you eliminate much of the opportunity for error.

A story stick, made from nothing more than a strip of wood, contains all of a project's critical measurements marked in full-scale proportion. Taken together, these marks present a precise visual representation—or story—of a project. Here are three great ways to put story sticks to work in your shop.

## 1 Furniture

Whether you work from published plans or your own, a story stick provides a visual double-check of the design. Make one from a slender scrap of wood 2–3" wide and slightly longer than the longest dimension of your project.

With a pencil and straightedge, divide the stick along its length into two or

three rows, as shown *above*, depending on the complexity of your project. Each row represents a different layer of the project—the case, the face frame, doors, drawers, etc.



Transfer measurements directly to the part blank, aligning it to display the most pleasing grain pattern or for efficient material use.

Starting from one end of the story stick measure and mark the critical dimensions of the project, clearly labeling each measurement. Mark the width layout lines on one side of the story stick (as shown here) and height on the other. If necessary, reserve a third row for the depth dimensions.

To use the story stick, butt the project part blank against the story stick and transfer the dimensions with a combination square to mark the locations of rips and crosscuts, as shown, *left*. Then, set your tablesaw fence or miter saw stops to cut on the line rather than relying on tape measures.

## 2 Reproductions

Along with detailed photos, a story stick makes a perfect tool to accurately reproduce a piece of antique furniture—especially when excess handling is a concern. Simply hold the stick alongside the piece and transfer all dimensions directly onto the stick. Back in the shop, you won't have to fudge the design details to fit estimated measurements; you'll have them completely contained in one convenient place.

# Story Stick



## 3 Built-ins

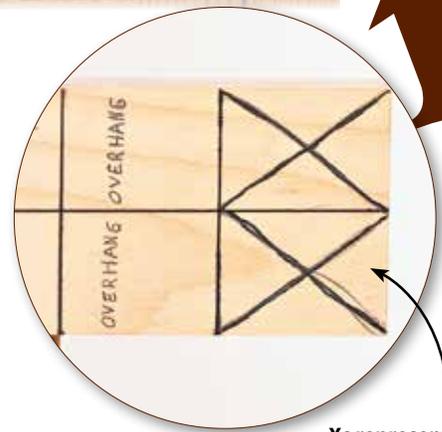
Story sticks excel in the production of built-ins, such as a niche bookcase, a window seat, or even a complete set of kitchen cabinets. For a built-in application, you'll need two story sticks with a combined length several inches longer than the built-in space or room wall.

Place double-faced tape on one stick where the two will overlap. Then stack the sticks and place them on a level line on the wall. Slide them outward to fit the space and tape them together. Mark index lines across both sticks so that they can be precisely lined up later, as shown, *right*, and tack the stick's end to the wall with small nails.

Mark any necessary cutouts, such as outlet and pipe locations, to eliminate measurement miscues back in the shop. Finally, add cabinet measurements in relation to the space's dimensions and architectural details, ensuring a pleasing layout and a proper fit (such as centering a sink beneath a window).



Transfer distant measurements to the story stick with a level. Then transfer the marks to the face of the story stick with a square.



Xs represent unused length.

## Happily ever after

After completing your project, store your story stick, plans, setup gauge (see Shop Tip, below), and any specialized jigs together in one location. When you're ready to duplicate that masterpiece, the story stick will be there to help you do it quickly and precisely. 🌱

Written by: **Lucas Peters**

## SHOP TIP

### A setup gauge: The rest of the story

The setup gauge, a close cousin to the story stick, makes it easy to quickly return your tablesaw fence to the proper position for rip cuts. Setup gauges can be as simple as offcuts that have been saved from an oversized project blank. Or make a single long setup stick for each project.

After each final cut, lower the blade to just above the tabletop and cut a slot in the setup stick. Label the slot with the part name. The next time you need to make a part of identical width, place the blade in the slot and butt the fence against the end of the stick.



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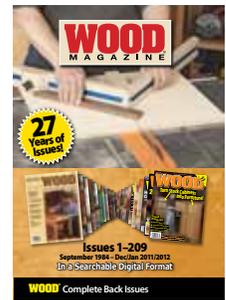
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