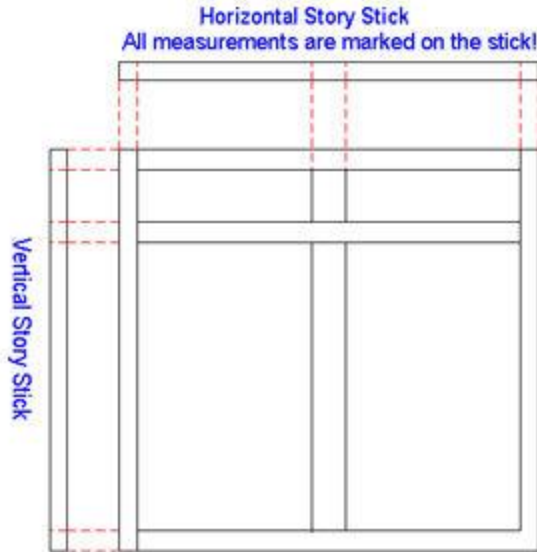


# Story Sticks

Woodcraft Posted on Sep 13, 2017 10:28 AM



Measuring tools such as tapes are essential to woodworking success, but there are ways to simplify measuring, and transferring measurements, that also help to prevent transfer mistakes.

Story sticks can provide enough information on the location, size and needs of cabinetry to almost eliminate the need for a measuring tape (you still shouldn't leave home without it). When you're building cabinets, the actual measurements are not as important as their relationships to each other. Story sticks do a better job of presenting that relationship than does any measuring tape, while also providing a

transfer medium that is dead accurate. Story sticks are really useful when you have a lot of repetitious cuts or items to make, as in drawers, but they can also be used to totally lay out a room for cabinets. As an example, let's grab two 8' long story sticks. These can be held together and marked to give the length of a wall from 8-1/2' to 14' (actually, a little longer, but for accuracy, try to add 20-25% to the lengths of the two sticks combined). Where the sticks overlap, make a mark and pencil in a quick description at that mark. Next, use the story sticks to mark out the location of any doors and windows, or other obstructions to base cabinets. You also use the story stick to mark out the locations of any plumbing and wiring already in place since those help determine cabinet placement.

## Vertical Story Sticks

A vertical story stick does the same thing for countertop locations, toe kick locations, window sill locations, window top locations, light switch plates and similar marking needs. Each location is a penciled mark, with a small notation next to it--make sure the notations are small, but large enough to read easily, and long enough to be understandable a week or two or three down the road.

Back in the shop, other story sticks can be prepared to show drawer front widths, drawer interior widths, drawer interior depths, cabinet depths or almost any measurement that is likely to need repeating. Door widths and heights may be on story sticks, as might toe kick depths, and much else.

Once you get used to story sticks, you'll consistently save time and energy when laying out cabinets, if you're doing more than two or three units (if the basic story sticks already exist in your shop, even a single cabinet can be laid out faster).

This great aid is simple to make: for greatest utility, and for durability, use 1-1/2" to 2" wide plywood in a light colored wood (so the pencil marks show readily). Hardwood plywoods such as birch and maple are generally easier to erase later, if needed.