 stupid questions. But I also love your enthusiasm for learning. Keep asking and experimenting, and you'll find that you're building a valuable skill set. Remember, practice makes perfect!
LASER LEVELS: FAST AND ACCURATE

A laser level is an incredibly useful, versatile tool. Accurate to within \( \frac{5}{16} \) in. over 100 ft., most are self-leveling, which means that after you set the laser on a tripod and get it close to level, the unit adjusts itself to perfectly level. Some models even beep when they’re ready. This model, a Stabila 03050 Self-leveling Compact Laser, retails for about $240, plus roughly $150 for the tripod. Laser levels and tripods are available at most rental centers. A water level also could have been used on this project. A bubble (or spirit) level, however, would have been awkward and unreliable for this type of project, unless the room had been small.

STEEL IS LIGHTER AND STRAIGHTER THAN WOOD

With one person on each end, lift the steel stud over the string and lower it to about \( \frac{1}{16} \) in. above the line. Keeping the steel stud above but not touching the stringline eliminates the chance of pushing the string down, resulting in a sloped ceiling. Once each end of the stud is lined up, screw it into the joist with \( 1\frac{1}{4} \) -in. drywall screws.

If wires or pipes run across the bottom of the joists, notch the studs around them (photo right). Where blocking requires notching the top of the stud, it sometimes makes sense to cut off the top flange altogether (photo far right).