THE YARDSTICK AGAIN

You need:
A yardstick

It is widely known that if you rest a yardstick on your extended forefingers, one at each end, and then move them toward each other, they will always meet at the center of the yardstick. This isn’t hard to explain. If one finger gets ahead of the other, weight on that finger increases. This increases the friction between the stick and the finger, and lowers friction on the other finger, allowing it to move ahead.

Now for the question: With both fingers at the center of the yardstick, what happens if you try to move them back to the ends of the stick where they started? Try guessing the answer before you try it. You may be surprised.

Answer: As soon as one finger starts to move, its friction against the yardstick decreases. The farther it moves, the less the friction. The result is that the first finger to move will go all the way to the end, while the other finger will remain at the stick’s center.