

The Basics of Refacing Kitchen Cabinets

When you know the basics of kitchen cabinet refacing, it sounds like a cinch to do. Give your kitchen an exciting new look with a makeover for your older cabinets. If you're content with your existing cabinet layout and the cabinets are still in good condition, then updating their look by refacing them is a smart alternative to replacing them.

As a matter of fact, you can save at least one-third the cost of new cabinets, and possibly twice that if you do the work yourself. And you'll be keeping your current cabinets # which are typically more solidly constructed than newer ones. In addition, you can improve their functionality with roll-out shelves, better drawer slides, and other accessories.

1. **Select a Door Type:** For traditional face-frame cabinets, choose a door/drawer that will be inset in the frame, that will overlay the frame by one half inch, or that is a cross between the two called a three-eighths of an inch inset. Mostly a matter of appearance, fully inset doors require perfectly square openings and more skill to fit properly. Fully concealed hinges can be utilized only with the overlay and fully inset types. Doors for frameless cabinets are either inset or overlay.

2. **Select a Door Style:** Decide on the wood species, profile (such as raised panel, flat panel), and finish (painted, prefinished natural, or unfinished). In many cases if the door you want is sold prefinished in a finish that you like, it pays to order prefinished. It saves time and, in many cases, you get a better-looking and more durable finish than one you might brush on. Unfinished components, however, can be altered to match moldings or other unfinished cabinets that may be part of an installation.

3. **Select Hinges:** Within the options available for your chosen door style, be sure to consider the opening capacity (ranging from about 100 to 180 degrees) and features such snap-closing and free-swinging, zero clearance (for roll-out shelves), and adjustability, which ranges from none to three-way (height, side, and depth).

4. **Measure for Doors and Drawers:** Measure the width and height of every door and drawer opening to within one-sixteenth inch. Remember that the opening that is covered by a false drawer front below your kitchen sink. For single-door openings, add to those dimensions twice the amount of any overlay. When two doors will cover a single opening, add the amount of overlay less one-sixteenth inch to half the opening width. (The height would be the same as for a single door opening.) For inset doors subtract a quarter inch from width and height.

5. **Determine Veneer Order:** To cover the front of the face frames so they will complement your doors, you'll need about 16 square feet of peel-and-stick veneer for every 10 cabinet doors. Use more as needed for drawer rails in combination door/drawer base units, or stiles and rails for drawer base units. (In this case, rails are the horizontal strips between the drawer and the door below, or between drawers, and stiles are the vertical strips to the sides of the doors and/or drawers.)

6. **Measure End Panels:** Measure wall and base cabinet end panels, which are covered with the complementing plywood or actual door panels. If any cabinets are meant to have glass doors, measure the inside dimensions of the side and back walls and order matching plywood to cover that, too.

7. **Complete Other Improvements:** While you are waiting for your order to arrive (typically four weeks or more), make any other improvements or needed repairs. You may choose replace shelves that are warped or water-damaged using plywood (edged with iron-on veneer) that matches the thickness of existing shelves.