

Chapter 17. Cabinets

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Tools needed by volunteers:

Nail apron
Tape measure
Square
Utility knife
Pencil

Materials needed:

2½” Cabinet screws
3” Cabinet screws
1¼” Wafer-head screws
Tapered cedar shims
2x4, 54” long
¾” Plywood
¼” Underlayment spacers (typically 3”x5”)
Weathermate™ Straight Flashing tape
Wood glue
Caulk

Tools and equipment needed:

Extension cords
Paslode nailers
Chop saw
Jig saw w/reverse tooth blade
Framing square
Caulk gun
6’ Level
3’ Level
Drills
Drivers
Clamps
Multitool
Cabinet hardware kit
Stepladders

Personal Protection Equipment:

Safety glasses (required)

Reference Materials:

Cabinet Plan

Safety First! Review the Safety Checklist before performing tasks in this chapter.

17.1. LAYING OUT KITCHEN CABINET UPPER UNITS

1. Check the kitchen Cabinet Plan and confirm that all units are available on site. Unpack all cabinets and use the box material to cover all vinyl surfaces in the house to protect against damage. Inspect the units for damage and report any to the Construction Supervisor
2. Set up a temporary work bench using cabinet boxes and a sheet of multi-ply underlayment to hold materials and tools.
3. Remove the doors on all cabinets by removing the screws from the stiles (leave the hinges on the doors). Collect the hinge screws and all cabinet related hardware in a container and store on the window sill.
4. The upper kitchen cabinets will be installed by mounting them to 3½” wide strips of ¾” thick plywood. This installation method is used because the screws holding up the cabinets go into the continuous plywood, rather than having to precisely locate the cabinet screws to hit a stud while holding them in place. The cabinets are 30” tall, with the top of the cabinet 84” and the bottom 54” from the floor. The top plywood support strip will be located about 1” down from the top, and the bottom of the lower strip about an inch up from the bottom of the cabinets. The following steps refer to Figure 17-1.

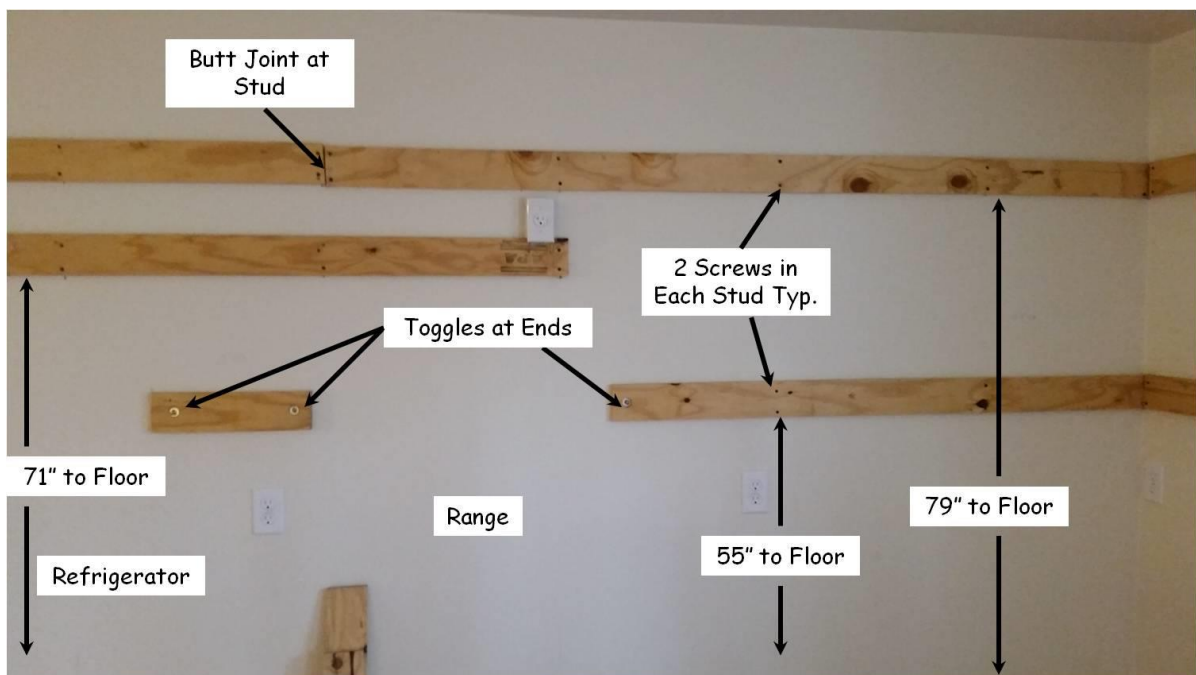


Figure 17-1. Kitchen Cabinet Support Strips.

5. Using the Cabinet Plan, mark the position(s) of the upper cabinets on the walls using light pencil lines. The Plan will specify an overall length (OAL) of the cabinets. Using a level, draw a horizontal line 79” up from the floor extending from the corner for the

OAL of the cabinets. The OAL line will be approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ " short of the eventual end of the cabinets, since they will be mounted $\frac{3}{4}$ " off the wall.

6. Do the same with another line 55" up from the floor, except where the range and refrigerator will be located. These areas need lines 71" from the floor.
7. Locate all of the studs within the cabinet outline, and tack finish nails into each at the previously drawn lines. These nails will serve to temporarily support the plywood during installation, and will aid in locating the support strip installation screws. Also, with pencil, mark the stud locations approximately 38" above the floor. These marks will be handy when installing the base cabinets, but will be covered by the countertop backsplash.

17.2. INSTALLING KITCHEN CABINET SUPPORT STRIPS

1. If not already completed, rip a sheet of $\frac{3}{4}$ " plywood into nominal 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ " wide strips. Determine the lengths required per the Cabinet Plan, and cut to length. Many installations have more than 8' of cabinets, so the plywood strips must be butted together at a stud.
2. Rest the support strips in place on the nails and mark the stud locations. Lower the strips, and drill two $\frac{3}{16}$ " pilot holes at each stud location about $\frac{3}{4}$ " from each edge.
3. If the end of a support strip lands between studs, prepare the end for a toggle bolt before screwing the strip to the wall. With a 1" spade bit, drill a counterbore approximately $\frac{3}{16}$ " deep. Then drill a $\frac{1}{4}$ " through hole in the center of the counterbore.
4. Hold the strip to the wall again, and mark the location of the toggle bolt hole on the wall. Lower the strip once more, and carefully drill a $\frac{5}{8}$ " hole just through the sheet rock. Too deep punctures the poly behind, and can wrap the drill bit with insulation.
5. Assemble a $\frac{5}{8}$ " washer on the toggle bolt, insert the bolt through the $\frac{1}{4}$ " hole, then thread the toggle onto the bolt with the wings pointing toward the plywood. Put the strip up in position against the wall, and gently pound the toggle through the sheet rock. To provide an air seal for the hole, put two or three pumps of caulk into the sheetrock hole behind the support strip, and a bit behind the washer, and tighten the screw most of the way.
6. Attach the strips using two 3" (minimum length) construction screws into all studs. At the corner, a 4" screw may be necessary, since the screw may need to be driven at an angle to hit the stud.

17.3. INSTALLING KITCHEN CABINET UPPER UNITS

1. Prepare each single unit for installation by drilling four $\frac{1}{8}$ " pilot holes in the back, drilling from inside to prevent unsightly breakout inside the cabinet. Holes should be located about 1" from each side, and about 2" from the cabinet top and bottom. Double

units need six holes, with an additional pair behind the center stile. The corner cabinet will need four holes in each side – two as described above, and two in each side near the beveled section.

2. Begin the installation with the corner cabinet. Use a 54” long 2x4 to support the front frame. Level across the top front, and check each side for plumb. Install a 2½” wafer head screw in an upper hole on each side. Double check level and plumb, and shim as necessary to make certain this unit is level and plumb. Install the remaining screws, checking level and plumb as each is installed.

NOTE: Tightening the screws can pull the cabinet out of plumb.

3. Check the Cabinet Plan to see if filler(s) are required between the corner and adjacent units before proceeding.
4. Check that the spacing on each side of the window will be equal. If required, adjust the width of the filler strip (if any) to be sure that the window reveal will be equal on both sides, and that the upper cabinets end even with the base cabinets.
5. If filler(s) are required, attach them to the adjacent cabinet stile. Clamp as required, keeping the ends and face flush, and install construction screws the appropriate length through the filler into the stile.
6. Using the 54” long temporary support 2x4 as noted above, start on either side, hold the adjacent upper cabinet next to the corner unit, and clamp the stiles and/or side panels together using quick clamps. Adjust the position until the stiles and/or filler piece are flush.
7. Attach the unit to the support strip with wafer head screws in two top holes. Do not fully tighten the screws at this time.
8. Because corner units have angled stiles, the units on each side of the corner unit are attached with 1⁵/₈” screws through the top and bottom of the corner unit SIDE PANEL into the stile and/or filler of the adjacent unit. A pilot hole must be drilled through the side panel at an angle into the stile. Be VERY CAREFUL to not drill through the face or out the far side of the stile.
9. Attach the adjacent unit to the corner cabinet with 1⁵/₈” long construction screws. Check for level and plumb, adjust as required, and install 2½” wafer head screws through the remaining back pilot holes into the support strips, checking for level and plumb as you proceed, and tighten all screws.
10. Repeat on the other side of the corner unit.
11. The next units are attached using the 54” 2x4 temporary support as before and clamping the stiles together using cabinet joining clamps and/or other clamps as required. Take care not to mar the finish on the stiles when clamping.

12. Get the stiles close to flush, and check that the unit is level, hold it in place by installing wafer head crews into the backing strip through two top holes. Don't tighten fully at this stage. Once the stiles are screwed together, come back and install the remaining screws into the back.
13. Recheck that the stiles are flush; when complete, use a tapered wood screw bit with countersink set to the correct depth to drill a hole through one stile into the second stile. Be sure the bit is set deep enough so that the screw does not split the wood. See Figure 17-2.

NOTE: The tapered drill bit can become very hot if the drill speed and/or feed is too high. The high temperature can dull the bit very quickly. Drill ½"-¾" deep at a time, then back the bit out to clear the chips, and repeat until the hole is the desired depth



Figure 17-2. Setting Tapered Drill Bit to Correct Depth.

14. Screw the stiles together using 2½" construction screws. USE CARE when tightening - it's easy to break the screws. Turn the screws in until the heads are flush. Repeat as required for the remaining upper units. Two or three screws are usually adequate to ensure the stiles are flush and the joint is tight along the entire length.
15. Shim between support strips and cabinets as needed to keep adjacent cabinet fronts flush. Recheck for level, and install the remaining wafer head screws into the support strips through the cabinet backs.
16. Follow the Cabinet Plan to complete the installation of all upper cabinets.

17.4. INSTALLING RANGE HOOD

1. Install the electrical cord on the range hood.
2. Based on the cord location, determine a hole location in the cabinet bottom for the cord to be inserted. Drill a 1¼" hole for the cord.
3. From inside the cabinet above the range, drill four pilot holes for the range hood pine strips in the cabinet bottom. The holes should be about 2" from each side, and 2" from the front and back.

4. Glue and screw 1x4 pine strips on the underside of the cabinet over the range to hold the exhaust fan. Screw DOWN into the strips from inside the cabinet with 1¼" wafer-head screws.
5. To provide better exhaust hood air flow, remove the damper from the vent extension.
6. Remove the screws from the vent extension and re-secure it to the range hood with Weathermate™ Straight Flashing tape cut to ~2" width. Be sure there are no gaps at the corners.
7. On the wall where the hood will go, draw a 4"x11" rectangle centered ½" below the cabinet.
8. Cut out the sheetrock on the lines from above and remove. Be sure the top edge of the cutout is at least ½" below the bottom of the cabinet to provide for an air sealing surface. See Figure 17-3.

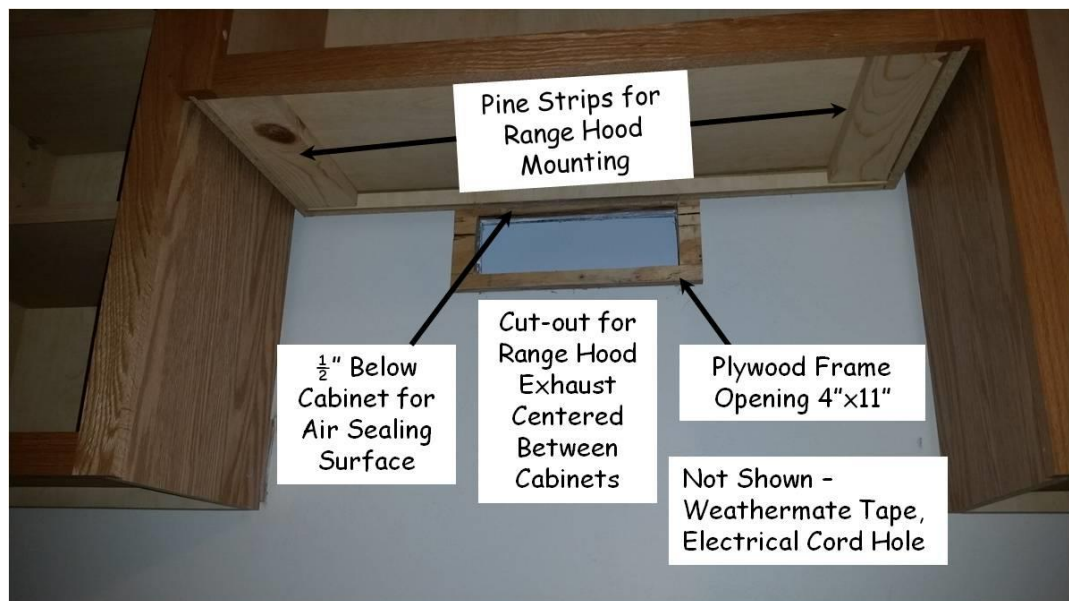


Figure 17-3. Range Hood Mounting Frame.

9. Using a multitool with a fine metal cutting blade, cut out, with care, the metal of the range plenum at the perimeter of the sheetrock opening.
10. If not supplied, cut a 6"x13" rectangular piece from ¾" plywood. From this piece, remove a 4"x11" rectangle, leaving a frame 1" wide on all sides.
11. Align the inside edges of this frame with the wall cutout completed in Step 9 above, and secure in place using Weathermate™ Straight Flashing tape. The top edge of the spacer will be recessed ½" behind the cabinet. Completely seal the space between the metal of the plenum, the drywall, and the plywood spacer, with no gaps, in order to prevent warm moist air from getting into the wall cavity.

12. Install weather stripping on the face of the plywood spacer, around the perimeter of the opening, making sure there are no gaps.

NOTE: Thoroughly sealing this area is critical to ensure that warm, moist air from cooking does not enter the wall cavity and cause moisture and mold problems in the future.

13. Lift the range hood into place, sliding the vent extension into the cutout in the range plenum. Run the electrical cord up through the hole into the upper cabinet.
14. Make sure the back of the range hood fits tight against the wall spacer frame so there are no gaps between the back of the hood and the weather stripping.
15. Fasten the range hood to the pine strips with 1¼" wafer-head screws.

17.5. INSTALLING KITCHEN CABINET FLOOR UNITS

1. Remove drawers from the cabinets and store them in an out of the way place.
2. Set the corner carousel unit in place with the faces 36" from each wall as shown in Figure 17-1.

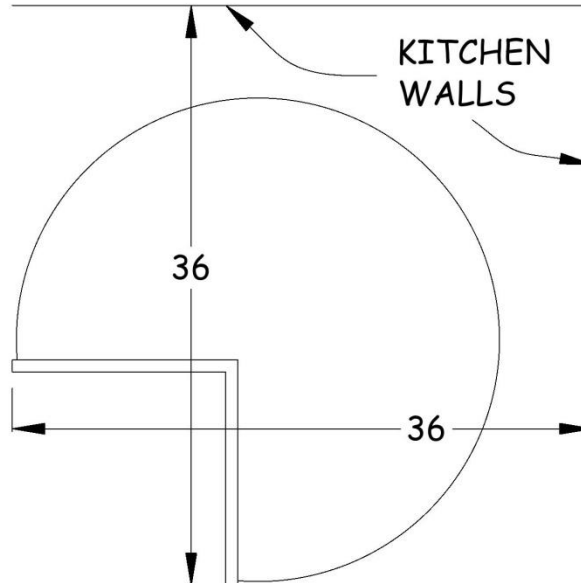


Figure 17-1. Corner Cabinet Installation

3. The sink unit may need holes in the bottom to allow water pipes to pass through and in the vertical back plate for drainage pipes and electrical boxes. Measure the location of the pipes and electrical box, using the window/cabinet centerline and floor as references. Transfer these measurements to the back and bottom of the cabinet.

4. The drain piping typically requires a 2½” hole. If that size hole saw is available, use that to make the hole. Otherwise, locate a spray can or similar object to use as a template, draw a round hole that size, then use a jig saw to cut the hole.
5. In the cabinet bottom, drill 1” holes at the location of the hot and cold water supply pipes.
6. Set the sink base in place centered below the window, then measure the space between the carousel and sink base frames. Refer to the Cabinet Plan to determine the width of any filler required adjacent to the corner unit. Attach as described for the upper cabinets.
7. Check the countertop length. The range is typically on the opposite side of the corner unit from the sink. The edge of the countertop adjacent to the range should end flush with the cabinet above. Assemble per the Cabinet Plan the required unit(s) located between the range and corner unit. Clamp and screw the stiles together as described for the uppers.
8. Place this assembly next to the corner unit. Locate the end opposite the corner flush with the upper cabinet that is next to the range hood opening above. To align the ends, use a level against the stiles of both upper and lower units.
9. Measure the gap between the corner unit and the one adjacent, and on the table saw, rip a filler piece to that width. Attach it to the stile adjacent to the corner unit as described for the upper units, then assemble that cabinet (or assembly) to the corner unit.
10. Repeat Step 9 on the refrigerator end.
11. Check that the top of the assembled cabinets is level, and that the face is straight. Shim under the corners, and/or between the back and wall as required. Attach the assembly to the wall using 2½” wafer head screws into studs. Complete for all base cabinets.
12. If the range, refrigerator or dishwasher are adjacent to the floor corner cabinet, install a cabinet end cap between the appliance and the cabinet. Cut the front hardwood filler attached to the end cap to width (to allow enough room for the appliance). Notch the front lower corner of the end cap to match the cabinet toe kick. Hold the cut-to-width filler against the cabinet stile, and mark on the floor the location of the inside edge of the panel. With a framing square, draw a line square to the cabinet front from the mark to the wall (check for square to the wall).
13. Cut two pieces of ¾” x 3” x 21” pine scrap or plywood. Align the edge of one of the pieces of pine board to the line from Step 12, on the corner cabinet side of the line. Screw it to the floor with three 1½” drywall screws. Place the second piece against the wall, on top of the first piece, with the bottom end flush on the floor piece, plumb it, and anchor to the wall (two or three 8d nails into a stud or toggle anchors if no stud). Put the end cap in place, anchor it to the cabinet stile in the usual way, and nail the back and bottom of the end cap to the pine boards or plywood with 1¼” Paslode finish nails.

14. Install toe boards with glue and 1¼” Paslode finish nails.

NOTE: If the Cabinet Plan includes a cabinet that may be removed for a future dishwasher, minimize the number of screws during installation. Cut a separate toe board for this cabinet so the toe board can then be easily removed without affecting the adjoining toe boards.

17.6. KITCHEN COUNTERTOP PREPARATION

1. Lay a 1x4 on top of the base cabinets near the wall corner. Place a level on top of the 1x4 with the level extended into the corner. Draw a line on the wall along the bottom of the level, and repeat on the other wall.
2. To provide support for the countertop in the corner, attach 2x4 scrap lumber about 26” long to the wall corner. Hold the top even with the line from Step 1, and screw the 2x4s to the wall using 4” screws into studs at each end.
3. Dry fit the mitered countertop and set in place to determine need for scribing and cutting the back splash. If scribing and cutting are needed, tape the top of the back splash. Shim a flat carpenter’s pencil to match the largest gap between the backsplash and the wall. Use this to scribe a pencil line on the backsplash by holding the shimmed pencil flat against the wall.
4. Use a belt sander, or a jig saw with a **reverse**-tooth blade that cuts on the down-stroke to avoid chipping the back splash. Cut leaving half of the pencil mark.
5. Dry fit countertop and set in place to double check the fit is correct. If not, re-scribe and cut again to ensure a snug fit to the wall. Use a belt sander to do fine adjustments, including putting a bevel (bottom farther from wall) on the edge of the backsplash. Make sure there is 30⅛” clearance for the stove, measured at both the front and back of the countertop.
6. Determine at what areas of the cabinets the countertop will be screwed to the cabinets. With the countertop temporarily in place, draw lines from below along the cabinet walls. There are usually corner blocks pre-installed in every corner of the cabinets that will work. Avoid the sink base because it may interfere with the installation of the sink

17.7. INSTALLING KITCHEN COUNTERTOP

1. Turn countertop over and glue and screw (using 1¼” wafer-head screws) ¾” x 3” pine strips to the underside of the countertop that will mirror the same location of the corner blocks on the cabinets. Later, screws will be placed through these cabinet corner supports to hold the countertop to the cabinets. Locate the pine boards so that they will lie on top of the cabinet walls.
2. Drill pilot holes through each of the diagonal support blocks in the cabinet corners where a pine board will be located.

3. Disassemble the dry fit and glue both edges **and the spline**. Reassemble and bolt units together making certain that top surfaces of both countertops are flush. Snug all bolts and set countertop in place. Wipe off excess glue with a wet paper towel and verify that joined edges remain flush.
4. Use 1¼” wafer-head screws to fasten the counter top to the cabinets from the bottom of the cabinet corner support into the pine strips under the counter top.

CAUTION: Check length of screws to avoid screwing up through the top of the counter, ruining the unit.

5. If a pantry cabinet is to be placed next to the countertop, it may be necessary to carefully chisel a notch in the proud edge of the cabinet stile to fit around the countertop.

17.8. INSTALLING BATHROOM CABINETS

1. Determine the location of the vanity from the drawing and cut holes in the back of the cabinet to allow for water and drain pipes.
2. Level and fasten the cabinet in place with 2½” cabinet screws to the wall studs (use ¼” winged toggle bolt anchors if needed).
3. Dry fit the countertop to determine if scribing and cutting are required. If so, scribe and cut to fit.
4. Turn countertop over and glue and screw (using 1¼” wafer-head screws) ¾” x 3” pine strips to the underside of the countertop that will mirror the same location of the corner blocks on the cabinets.
5. Set the countertop in place and fasten to the cabinet following the same procedure used for the kitchen countertop (see Section [17.7](#)).

CAUTION: Check length of screws to avoid screwing up through the top of the counter, ruining the unit.

6. If a linen cabinet is to be placed next to the vanity, it may be necessary to carefully chisel a notch in the proud edge of the cabinet stile to fit around the countertop.