

Cabinet Doors - Measuring for Replacement Doors

"I want to make sure I get the right sizes." We hear this over and over from customers - both professionals and do-it-yourselfers looking to replace kitchen cabinet doors. This is usually followed by, "Can you tell me what sizes I need?"

For better or worse, I can't tell them (or you) what size replacement doors are needed, but I can give you the techniques to figure the sizes out. (Of course, if you want the doors and drawer fronts to be the same size as you're current doors and if those doors haven't been too severely damaged or misshapen, then the technique is simple: measure the doors you have. For the purpose of these articles, we're going to assume that's not a viable alternative.

Step number 1 is to determine what type of cabinet you have. In general, cabinets fall into two different categories: face-framed or frameless. Face-framed cabinets are a more traditional style whereas frameless (also called European-style) cabinets are considered more contemporary. To determine which you have, picture the cabinet with the doors closed. If the doors and drawer fronts completely cover the fronts of the cabinets, with no more than 1/8" showing between adjacent doors and drawers (other than where fillers are added in corners, etc.), then you have frameless cabinets. On face-framed cabinets, you would see a gap of at least 1/4" - usually more - along the hinge side of any door. When you open the doors, face-framed cabinets have a frame around and between each opening. The frame typically measures 1-1/2" wide, but sometimes can be two or more inches wide. When two cabinets are side-by-side, the total width of the frame between the openings will be 3" or more.

If you have frameless cabinets, your sizing choices are limited, but there are issues to contend with. We'll deal with that in a future article.

For face-framed cabinets you have to make a choice. The choice is this: how much of the frame do you want to see when the doors are closed? Put another way, how much of the frame should be covered by the door? This coverage amount is called the "overlay". Technically, the overlay can be any amount ranging from 1/4" up to 1/8" less than the frame width. (That is 1-3/8" for the typical cabinet with 1-1/2" frames.) The only caveat is that you have to find a hinge that works with that overlay choice, which shouldn't be a problem for most 1/8" increments up to 2".

What if you want to cover the entire frame? Sorry, you can't. Hinges require **at least** 1/4" clearance to function properly. So, if you have two standard face-framed cabinets with 1-3/8" overlay next to each other, you'll have (barely) 1/4" between the doors. It'll work, but I don't recommend it. You won't be able to open both doors at once and any misalignment will lead to rubbing.

The most common overlay options are 1/2" (partly because it's the easiest to calculate) and 1-1/4" (because it's the closest viable option to a "full" overlay.) The overlay does not have to be the same on all sides of the door, but it usually is.

Next: Sizing Cabinet Doors and Drawer Fronts for 1/2" Overlay

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