

Drawing the footprint out ahead of time, although a little time consuming, will help you troubleshoot and correct problems before you begin, in essence saving you unwanted headaches and giving you the ability to have a good install time on the back end.

Just so you understand, even in a new home you will find floors out of level, walls out of plumb and crowned studs that can cause in and outs in walls. Its all part of the building process – there is no such thing as perfect in this business because of imperfect building materials, the varying experience of construction crews and other factors. If you don't take the time to compensate for these imperfections during the installation process by shimming and levelling correctly, your end result will be less than desired. Let's look at it this way, if you install an 8-foot run of cabinetry by simply screwing boxes tight to a wall that is in and out, the cabinetry then takes the shape of the imperfect wall and is no longer square and true. Doors will appear to be warped, drawer boxes will be twisted and not slide properly and moldings will not sit straight. Remember, doors and drawers, crown moldings, etc. only install and operate correctly on square and level cabinetry. If you think you are saving time by skipping this process, it will take you three times as long to make adjustments at the end, which will never look right anyway.



Helpful Hint

Now that your cabinet lines are marked on the wall, use a stud finder to find and mark stud centers. Use a hammer and 3" finish nail to confirm stud centers, being careful on exterior walls not to compromise the vapor barrier under the drywall by punching holes. Finished cabinetry will hold a lot of weight so you will want to be sure it is fastened securely.

Cabinetry and installation is a finer craft with less tolerance for being imperfect. The absolute best advice I can give you through the installation process is to be meticulous about level, plumb and square for best results. In other words, **LEVEL + PLUMB = SQUARE**, assuming the cabinetry has been manufactured correctly. The top and bottom of the cabinet should be level, the face and sides of the cabinet on each gable should be plumb. If you achieve this, the cabinet should be equal to square. A good 4-foot level and lots of shims will be to your advantage here.

Always install base cabinets first. Base cabinets and tall pantry cabinets, once installed, will determine both the exact height of the wall cabinetry, as well as centre lines for matching upper cabinetry. If you're installing wall cabinets first, you are bound to run into trouble.

With base cabinets set in place, begin by screwing them together gable to gable (side to side), with 1 1/8" cabinet screws. With base cabinetry, pay close attention to make sure you flush the face and top of the cabinet. On wall cabinets, flush the face and the bottom of the cabinet.

Using a 4-foot level, skim over the length of the base cabinetry while it is sitting in position to determine the highest point of the floor. Once you determine the high point, level and secure that cabinet into place. Experienced installers may choose to scribe cabinetry down to floors in an effort to minimize extreme shimming and gapping. Shim & secure each consecutive cabinet accordingly from that point, keeping in mind the LEVEL + PLUMB = SQUARE rule. Once the boxes have been correctly installed, you can proceed with dressing them – adding shelving, doors, handles, countertops and molding treatments.

Hint

The sides of any cabinet are referred to in the industry as "gables". Use a #8 screw setter to pre-drill gables when attaching them side-to-side. This will aid in helping you maintain flush edges, simultaneously countersinking the screw accurately. Some installers will use clamps to hold the cabinetry in place through this process for increased accuracy.

Installation of laminate countertops is an art in itself with many tricks required, and best left for another article. ☒



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