



TS RENOVATIONS · CABINETRY CARE

Cabinet Care Guide

Every cabinet material and finish wears a little differently with daily use, and asks for its own kind of care. Here's what makes each one a good fit, and how to keep your cabinetry working and looking its best for years to come.

AT A GLANCE

Materials → **Finishes** → **Hardware** →

Eight Habits That Keep Your Cabinets In Top Shape

A FEW THINGS TO KNOW FIRST

Cabinetry is one of the hardest-working parts of a kitchen or bath. Materials, construction, finish, and hardware all affect how it looks, feels, and performs over time. The right choices depend on where the cabinetry is used, how much use it will see, and the look you want.

Different materials and finishes respond differently to everyday use and changing conditions. Here in Vermont, seasonal swings from dry winter air to humid summer days can be especially noticeable with natural wood. Knowing what to expect from the materials you selected will help you care for them properly and keep your cabinetry looking and working its best.

MATCHED TO HOW YOU'LL USE IT

Everyday Kitchen Cabinets

Take the most daily traffic of anywhere in the house, so a durable box material and a wipeable finish matter most here.

Bath & Laundry Cabinetry

Live with more ambient humidity than a kitchen does, which makes moisture-resistant construction count for more than the finish on top.

Pantry & Built-Ins Cabinetry

Pantry, mudroom, and built-in cabinetry see lighter daily handling, which leaves more room for a softer finish or a statement wood species to hold up just fine.

Get to Know Your Cabinets



CABINET MATERIALS

Solid Wood

Cut and milled from solid lumber, in species like maple, oak, cherry, and hickory, solid wood brings genuine grain and texture to a door or drawer front. It expands and contracts with seasonal humidity, which is what calls for the occasional hinge adjustment.

MDF

Made by compressing fine wood fibers with resin under heat and pressure, MDF holds an ultra-smooth, consistent surface that takes paint and lacquer better than particleboard does, which is why it's the standard core behind a painted door.

Particleboard

Made the same way as MDF but from larger wood chips, particleboard is a more budget-friendly core, most often used inside a cabinet box. It also shows up on door fronts paired with solid wood, most commonly as the center panel inside a solid wood frame. Keeping standing water off an edge or seam keeps it structurally sound for years.

FINISHES

Painted & Lacquered

Sprayed on over a primed door, paint and lacquer bring a smooth, uniform color that wipes clean easily. Lacquer shows fingerprints more than a matte paint, and a matched touch-up kit keeps a small chip invisible for years.

Wood Veneer

A thin layer of wood bonded over an MDF or particleboard door face, veneer gives the look and grain of solid wood at a lower price point, with fewer refinishes over its lifetime than solid wood allows.

Laminate

A high-pressure laminate sheet bonded to an MDF or particleboard core, laminate brings a hard, scratch-resistant surface that wipes down easily and works best on flat door profiles.

HARDWARE

Hinges

Most cabinetry today uses a concealed, adjustable hinge with a built-in screw that moves the door in three directions. Many close with a soft-close mechanism that eases the door shut gently.

Pulls & Knobs

The finish on a pull or knob ages differently from the door around it. Polished chrome and stainless stay bright with wiping, while unlacquered brass or copper develops a natural living patina over time.

Stained & Natural

Wiped or sprayed directly onto bare wood, stain lets the grain show through and keep speaking for itself. It deepens and warms with age and light exposure, developing a rich patina over time.

Glazed, Distressed & Whitewashed

A glaze brushed over paint or stain adds contrast in corners and detail work. Distressing adds a few faux-worn edges, and a whitewash mutes the grain under a soft wash of color. All three reward a gentle touch over heavy scrubbing.

Glides & Pull-Outs

Drawers and pull-out trays ride on a ball-bearing or soft-close glide rated for a specific weight and full extension. A small adjustment screw resets one that's begun to sag or stick.



Good cabinetry can have more than one life. Solid wood cabinets can be refinished or repainted as styles and tastes change, giving them an entirely different look years down the road. It doesn't make sense for every project, and sometimes replacement is the better route, but well-made solid wood cabinetry can give you options when things change or a simple refresh is all the space really needs.

WORTH KNOWING



Box Construction

A plywood box handles moisture with more resilience than particleboard, and stronger joinery, doweled, mitered, or dovetailed, adds real durability over cost-saving stapled joints.



Restrictor Hinges

A restrictor hinge stops a door at a set point rather than allowing it to swing fully open, used selectively where it's genuinely useful, like next to a walkway or an appliance.



Sink & Trash Pull-Out

With daily spills and constant in-and-out use, the sink base and trash pull-out cabinets wear faster than anywhere else in the kitchen, worth an extra look during routine cleaning.





Eight Habits That Keep Your Cabinets In Top Shape

A few of these habits matter everywhere in the kitchen, cleaning gently and keeping humidity steady chief among them. Others are specific to where daily wear shows up first, like the sink.

1

Choose the right cleaner for the mess. A damp cloth handles most everyday wiping, mild soap tackles anything tougher, and skipping polishes or harsh chemical cleaners keeps a finish looking newer longer.

2

Handle small chips and scratches early with your touch-up kit. Every kitchen comes with one, and it's the go-to fix to reach for the moment a chip or nick shows up as the kitchen sees everyday use.

3

Adjust a door that's drifted out of alignment. Everyday use can knock a door out of alignment over time, and most hinges have a built-in screw that puts it right back in seconds.

4

Let doors and drawers close with a light touch. A gentle nudge is all it takes, no forcing needed, and that habit protects hinges and glides while keeping a soft-close mechanism feeling smooth for years longer.

5

Keep indoor humidity steady through the seasons. Vermont's swing from dry winters to humid summers makes solid wood and engineered panels expand and contract, and a humidifier in winter alongside normal air conditioning in summer helps them hold their shape.

6

Set a sink mat or tray under the sink. It catches small drips before they become real water damage, and does the same for any cleaning supplies stored underneath that can leak or spill.

7

Mind how much weight a drawer or shelf carries. A drawer loaded with heavy cookware puts extra strain on its glides over time, and stacking too many heavy cans or small appliances onto a single shelf can cause it to sag or flex.

8

Skip adhesive hooks on finished doors. The backing can pull at a painted or lacquered finish when it's removed, and the extra weight hanging off a door adds strain its hinges weren't designed for.

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Built to Last



Cabinets are built to handle everyday life: dishes loaded and unloaded a dozen times a week, hands reaching for the same pulls morning and night, a drawer closed with an elbow when both hands are full. Working these habits into your routine is what keeps all of that in good shape for years to come.

Give the hinges, glides, and finish a little attention, and your cabinets will keep performing as beautifully as they look.



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