

## Kitchen Cabinet Facelift

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If you've been thinking of updating your kitchen cabinets, why not do it this weekend? It's easier (and cheaper) than you might think. With a little elbow grease and creativity, you can update your kitchen cabinets without going through the hassle of an entire remodel. Lowe's is happy to provide this information as a service to you.

### Cleaning

Heat, water, grease and food residue can take their toll on your kitchen cabinets. And you might be surprised what a good scrubbing can do. When you are ready to clean your cabinets, have the following on hand:

To clean your cabinets:

1. If you choose to remove the doors, be sure to label or number the doors so they'll go back in the right place. (If you're sanding or painting, don't sand off or paint over the marks.) The holes for the hinges (door and frame) need to match too, so you can easily determine which door goes where.
2. Lay plenty of drop cloths to protect countertops, appliances and floors.
3. Wear gloves and eye protection when using a cleaner such as TSP.
4. Clean thoroughly, following the cleaner's instructions. Keep a clean surface of the cloth in contact with the cabinet for best results.
5. Rinse the cabinets. If the rinse water looks dirty, repeat the cleaning process.
6. Allow the wood to dry.

### Cleaning and Updating Cabinet Hardware

Hardware (including hinges) gets greasy and dirty, too. Since you have the doors off, remove the cabinet knobs and hinges and clean the hardware.

1. Soak the hardware in a soapy water solution for 30 minutes.
2. Scrub lightly with a soft brush and rinse.
3. Let dry and apply the proper polish.

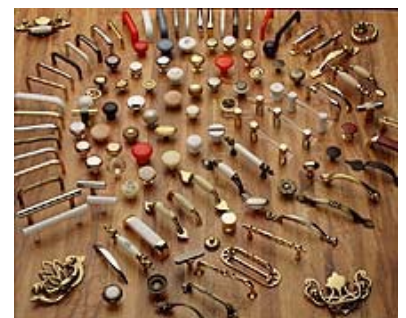
If you need to replace one or two pieces, take one set with you when you go shopping. But, if your cabinet hardware is older, it may be difficult to find an exact match. With all the knobs and hinges off, it's a great time to shop for new, updated hardware. You should also take some of your old hardware along to make sure the new hardware will fit your existing doors.

Many decorative styles of hinges, knobs and pulls are available in a variety of colors, metals and finishes:

- Antique copper
- Polished chrome
- Polished, sterling, or antique brass
- Nickel
- Aged bronze
- Ceramics (knobs and pulls)
- Iron



Have your kitchen cabinets seen better days?



With all the knobs and hinges off, it's a great time to shop for new, updated hardware.

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When choosing the finish for your hardware, think about what style will look best in your home. If your style is traditional, brushed finishes, polished brass, nickel or pewter will complement your décor. If you have a more contemporary décor, choose finishes with an enameled or high gloss-metal shine or theme hardware to blend with the overall look of the kitchen.

### Adding Moulding

You can dress up drab cabinet doors with moulding. A contrasting finish or color is a quick and inexpensive way to change the look of your kitchen.

### Stripping and Refinishing

If your cabinets still don't look spectacular after cleaning, you may have to refinish or paint them. The cabinet refinishing process is similar to refinishing furniture.

Unless you're planning to take your cabinets down, there are a few extra things to remember. As you've already discovered from cleaning, working with cabinets in place on the wall can be messy and awkward. Liquid strippers work best, but be sure to use the gel or semi-paste types. They won't drip as much when used on vertical surfaces. However, before you can buy the proper stripper, you'll need to find out what kind of finish you have on your cabinets.

The original finish is one of several possible materials. Most of them look identical to an untrained eye. Use the chart below to determine what type of finish you have. Find an inconspicuous spot on the wood to perform the tests.



**Good idea:** Before undertaking refinishing, remind yourself that it takes a lot of time and effort. Also, remember that your kitchen may be out of commission for a while.

#### If You Suspect Your Finish Is

**Wax**

#### Determine By

Put a few drops of **turpentine** on the wood. If the finish dissolves, it's wax based.

**Shellac**

Apply a few drops of **denatured alcohol**. If the finish dissolves quickly, it's shellac.

**Lacquer or shellac**

Try a few drops of **lacquer thinner** to dissolve.

**Water-based finish**

A few drops of **Xylene** liquefies water-based finishes.

**Polyurethane or varnish**

**Paint/varnish remover** strips these materials, but you'll probably still have to sand some of the old finish off.

#### Other Finishes You May Encounter (and What to Do About Them):

**Penetrating oil**

The product does just what its name says, so nothing can remove it. The color is not strippable since it's become part of the wood. If the wood is dry, it can be clear-coated, waxed, or painted.

**Paint**

Determine whether the paint is oil-based or water-based (latex).

Rub a rag or cotton ball moistened with denatured alcohol on the paint surface. If it rubs off or gets soft, it's latex. Alcohol will not affect oil paint.

Latex paint can be applied over oil if the old surface has been lightly sanded and properly primed.

**Vinyl covered or Formica surfaces**

Do not attempt to paint or refinish. Cabinets surfaced with these materials should only be done by a professional.

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Always let the stripping agent do the work. Even though these products are relatively easy to use, if you're not an experienced refinisher you may want to start with an inconspicuous area or door. Remember to keep countertops, appliances, and floors covered when stripping and refinishing.

After stripping and before refinishing or painting, patch any conspicuous holes, scratches, and nicks with wood filler. When dry, sand lightly to smooth out the patch. Before painting, sand lightly and prime.

**Note:** Before you decide to paint floating panel cabinet doors, remember that the wood expands and contracts with the seasons which will cause the paint bead to separate and expose unpainted wood.