



How to Install or Replace Cabinet Hinges

Installing cabinet hinges improves the look and functionality of cabinet doors, particularly if the doors sag, are loose or don't close fully. If you're installing new cabinet doors, it's a key step. Installing cabinet hinges can be a relatively simple project. We'll show you how to do it.

When Do You Need to Install New Cabinet Hinges?

Installing new cabinet hinges can solve several problems including the ones below:

- Your cabinet doors don't remain fully closed.
- Your doors hang crookedly.
- One or more of your hinges is broken.
- You're installing new cabinets.
- You're installing new cabinet doors.

In addition, if you have surface-mount hinges that are visible on the cabinet door exterior, you may want to replace the hinges to change the look of your kitchen.

Hinge Types for Cabinet Construction Types

To install the right cabinet hinges, you first need to know if your cabinets have a framed or frameless construction. There are different hinge types for cabinets with different constructions.

Face-Frame Cabinets

Framed construction is the most common for cabinets in the US. As the name suggests, framed or face-frame cabinets have a structure — the frame — fastened to the cabinet box edges, partially covering the front opening of the box. Door hinges on framed cabinets attach to this front frame. You'll install face frame hinges to attach to the frame.

Frameless Cabinets

Frameless cabinets, European cabinets and euro-style cabinets are all terms that describe this type of cabinet construction. With no frame or structure covering the front of the cabinet box, frameless construction means the cabinet door hinges attach directly to the cabinet boxes. You'll need to install frameless hinges that attach to the wall of the cabinets.

Choosing the Right Cabinet Hinges for Your Door Fit

Once you know if you need framed or frameless hinges, you need to choose between concealed and surface-mount hinges and between overlay and inset hinges.

Concealed vs. Exterior Surface-Mounted Cabinet Hinges

Conceal hinges mount to the cabinet or frame interior and door interior. The hardware isn't visible on the exterior of the cabinet or door face. The design of this hinge type requires a hole or mortise in the cabinet door for each hinge, making installation a bit more complex than installation of surface-mounted hinges. However, concealed hinges create a sleek look and are typically adjustable, allowing you to make minor changes to the fit of the cabinet door.

Exterior surface-mounted cabinet hinges attach to the face of the cabinet and door. Installation is usually simpler than with concealed hinges since you don't need to cut a mortise in the door. You just need to attach the hinges with screws. While simpler to install, these hinges don't usually allow for adjustments after installation.

Overlay vs. Inset Cabinet Hinges

Hinges can be overlay hinges or inset hinges. The terms overlay and inset describe how the door fits to the cabinet box. You'll need to select hinges that work with the fit of your doors. Overlay refers to the amount of space that your doors will "overlay" your cabinet frame or cabinet opening. For example, if your cabinet doors have a 1/2-inch overlay, make sure you purchase 1/2-inch overlay hinges. On cabinets with a full overlay, the cabinet door covers the edge of the cabinet box. The design of a full overlay hinge allows the door to open without interference from the cabinet box edge.

Inset cabinet doors install so the door faces are flush with the edge of the cabinet frames or edges, allowing this part of the cabinet to be visible. If you have this type of cabinet door, you'll need an inset hinge to allow the door to pivot without hitting the cabinet.

You can also have partial overlay and partial inset doors as in these illustrations of exterior surface-mount hinges. As the illustrations suggest, if you have partial overlay or partial inset doors, you'll need hinges specific to that design for the doors to open and close correctly.

Are You Replacing Cabinet Hinges or Installing Hinges for New Doors?

The process for installing cabinet hinges will vary depending on whether you're replacing hinges on cabinets with existing doors or you're installing hinges on new cabinet doors.

Replacing Cabinet Hinges

For replacement hinges, you should be able to find compatible new hardware. For example, if you're replacing concealed hinges with compatible new hinges, you'll simply need to remove the existing hardware, install the new hinges and adjust them to align and fit the door correctly. You can often use the placement of the existing hinges as a guide for the new hardware.

Installing Hinges for New Cabinet Doors

Installing concealed hinges for new doors is a bit more complex since you'll typically need to measure for and then bore a hinge cup hole or mortise. A cabinet hinge installation jig will make this job much easier.

Installing surface-mount hinges on new doors will require a bit more measurement than replacing existing hinges, since you'll have no existing placement to match.

Concealed Hinge Cup Size

If you're replacing concealed hinges that require mortises, make sure you get hinges that have the same cup size as your existing hinges. A 35mm-diameter cup is the most common for kitchen cabinets, but you may also see a 26mm cup on small hinges.

How to Install Cabinet Hinges as Replacements or for New Doors

We'll give you general steps for replacing concealed cabinet hinges below, along with variations for installing new hinges and installing external surface-mounted hinges. These steps cover common installations but always follow the instructions that come with your hinges.

For any type of cabinet hinge, it's best to have a helper support the cabinet doors while you work. You'll need a good work space that allows you to work on the doors without risk of damage and you'll want to empty your cabinets before you begin.

Installation Instructions

Step 1: Remove the Door

While your helper supports a cabinet door, use a screwdriver to remove the hinges from the cabinet side or frame. Repeat the process for all the doors. Remove any handles or knobs and set the doors in a location where they won't fall or get damaged.

Step 2: Remove the Hinges

Use your screwdriver to remove the hinges from the doors. If you're replacing concealed hinges you may need to carefully pry them out from the cup hole or mortise in the door.

Step 3: Mark the Screw Hole Locations

Place one of the new hinges over a hinge location on a door to check the fit and screw hole locations. Your new hinges should include the precise measurements to place the hardware correctly.

- If you're replacing concealed hinges, check to ensure the new hinge cups fit the mortises on the door. Place the cups of the hinges in the mortises and check the screw hole locations. Make sure you align the hinges correctly and mark the locations for any new holes. Remove the hinges.
- If you're installing concealed hinges on a new door, a concealed hinge jig is a time-saving option that'll allow you to easily bore the cup holes and pre-drill screw holes. Mark the hinge locations and set the jig to the hinge offset measurements to prepare for installation.
- If you're replacing exterior hinges, check to see if the screw holes line up, and if not, if the new hinges will cover the existing screw holes. If the holes will be exposed, you'll need to fill them with wood filler. You may need to repaint the doors to fully mask the holes. Make sure the hinges are lined up correctly and use a pencil to mark the locations for new holes.
- If you're installing exterior hinges on a new door, use the manufacturer's measurements to mark the screw hole locations.

Step 4: Install the Hinges on the Doors

Clamp the first door to a stable work surface. You'll be drilling pilot holes for the hinge screws — and for concealed hinges on a new door you'll be drilling the cup holes — and then secure the hinges in place. Select a drill bit with a diameter slightly smaller than that of the installation screws to drill your pilot holes. Use the manufacturer's measurements or the screw shaft length to mark the correct depth on the drill bit with painters tape.

- If you're replacing hinges, carefully drill pilot holes at the screw hole locations using the tape as a depth guide. Keep the drill as straight as

possible and pay attention to the tape on the bit so you don't drill through the door.

- If you're installing concealed hinges on a new door, clamp the jig in place on the door. Attach the included cutter bit to your drill and bore the mortise. Drill pilot holes for the mounting screws at the locations the jig indicates, being careful to avoid drilling through the door.

Fit the hinges in place. For concealed hinges, make sure you can fully insert the cups into the cup holes so the screw ears are flush against the door. Secure the hinges with the included screws but don't overtighten. Repeat the process for all of your doors.

Step 5: Mark the Hinge Locations on the Cabinets

Open the hinges on the first door and have your helper hold the door in place. Ensure the door is level. You may want to mark the center points of the door edges and the cabinet frame or edges to align the door properly. If you have a full or partial overlay, measure and lightly mark the overlay on your cabinets with a pencil. Your hinge documentation should have measurements to help you position the cabinet side of the hinges correctly.

Once you have the door properly supported, leveled and aligned, mark the hinge screw hole locations on the cabinet. Remove the door. Repeat for all of your doors.

Step 6: Attach the Doors to the Cabinets

Mark your bit for the proper depth and drill pilot holes for the screws. As with your doors, if your new hinges don't work with the existing cabinet mounting holes, fill the holes with wood filler. Make sure the patches and any touch up paint or finish is dry before installing the doors.

Attach the hinges with the included screws. Concealed hinges typically allow for some adjustment up and down and left to right as well as backwards and forwards. Adjust the hinges as necessary. Repeat the steps above for your remaining doors.

Step 7: Install Door Hardware and Add Bumpers as Necessary

Replace your door knobs or handles or, for new cabinets, install the hardware. Attach bumpers at the top and bottom corners of each door at the edge across from the hinges.

How Many Hinges Do You Need for a Cabinet Door?

Check your hinge documentation for information on the recommended number of hinges for the size and weight of your cabinet doors. If you're replacing existing hardware with similar hinges, you can typically simply match the number of existing hinges. To estimate how many hinges you'll need for new doors, take a look at these general tips but always follow the specifications from your hinge manufacturer.

- For 36-in doors up to 13 lbs, plan for two hinges per door.
- For 58-inch doors up to 26 lbs, plan for three hinges per door.
- For 80-inch doors up to 37 lbs, plan for four hinges per door.
- For 92-inch doors up to 50 lbs, plan for five hinges per door.