



**KITCHEN & BATH  
TRANSFORMATIONS**  
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# Cabinet Starter Guide





There are few renovations as overwhelming and expensive as that of the modern kitchen. Often costing in the tens of thousands of dollars, it can seem financially impossible to update the busiest room in the house. However, you're not stuck with an outdated kitchen if you know a few tricks for paring down costs when it comes to one often-pricey change: cabinets. Skip a full-priced cupboard replacement and improve them instead.

One of the best kitchen renovation ideas is cabinet refacing. Rather than replacing expensive kitchen cabinets, simply reface them for a contemporary look that costs 50-60 percent less than traditional replacement. Here's everything you need to know about the process, from the amount of time it takes to the myriad design options, so you can make an informed decision and create a beautiful new space.

## Visual Impact

Before you begin, consider the size and scope of the room. The cabinets in most kitchens take up a great amount of space, as much as 75 percent of the area, depending on the style. Decide how much visual impact the cabinets should have before you start any renovation plans in earnest. Lighter colored woods and simple designs lessen the heft, while darker woods and decorative styles dramatize the space. It's easier for a larger kitchen to go to the dark side, as the deep tones can make a room feel smaller.

## Down Time

One of the main drawbacks of updating a kitchen is dealing with downtime. A serious renovation means a shuttered kitchen for several weeks or more, especially with custom shelving. Fortunately, cabinet refacing takes only a few days—usually fewer than four—to complete, so you can focus on finishing other kitchen renovation ideas in a hurry. Additionally, any quality professional outfit will clean up the mess between workdays, allowing you full use of the kitchen (albeit without cabinets) after hours.

## How it Works

It's true that you can do some types of cabinet refacing alone, but it's always smart to employ a professional to ensure the best quality end result that comes with a long-lasting guarantee. Once hired, a professional will measure your kitchen and speak with you about options, from materials to design preferences, before beginning the dismantling of the cabinets. He or she will remove all the doors (you'll receive new ones) and hardware before sanding down the boxes in preparation for the next step.

If you've chosen RTF, laminate or wood for your new cabinets, then the craftsman will either mold or cut veneers for the boxes and order brand new doors in your chosen color. Pick out modern hardware and pulls to finish off the look once the new doors and veneers are finished. Veneers are applied using either cement glue or nails, the holes from which are then filled. You now have a beautiful new kitchen.



## Design Options



Sometimes the hardest part of starting a kitchen project isn't costing it or doing the work, it's deciding on the design and materials. Most cabinet refacings use lacquer, laminate, RTF or wood.

There are numerous articles detailing kitchen renovation ideas that are guaranteed to save you money on your renovation, but cabinet refacing is not only a money-saver, it's also a time-saver and earth-saver too. Don't throw away your sturdy, character-filled cabinets when a simple, inexpensive update will do.



## Kitchen Cabinet Refacing Material Choices

There are four main options, and each has its own list of pros and cons. Here is an overview of the common materials used for cabinet refacing and what each has to offer.

### Lacquer

The simplest, swiftest and cheapest way to update kitchen cabinets is to use lacquer. But it's not quite as simple as painting over the current doors and calling it a good job.

Home owners should only consider lacquer if their current cabinets are in great shape, and they love the style of the door fronts but want to update the color alone. Door fronts and drawers are removed during this process, sanded down and applied with a fresh lacquer, paint or stain. The cabinet boxes must also be stained and refreshed. Replacing the pulls and hardware with modern designs will finish off the look.



### Rigid Thermofolios

The next step up from lacquer, RTF changes the style and color of cabinets. It's malleable and moldable, so it can take on a variety of stylish shapes found on panels, including arched, cathedral and raised. While it looks like wood from a distance, up close RTF is clearly an inorganic material. However, it's a fantastic option for homes with rowdy children, as it's both durable and easy to clean. But, a professional must install RTF fronts. As is the case with lacquer refacings, RTF updates also call for the replacement of hardware and pulls for a truly impressive and contemporary result.

## PVC or Laminate

Laminate has a much more wood-realistic finish than RTF, making it one of the most popular options for kitchen cabinet refacing. Though it's a bit pricier than RTF, it's still considerably cheaper than using real wood, without sacrificing much in the way of appearance. Laminates also come in many more solid colors than RTF, allowing the home owner greater versatility in design. Installing PVC veneers is doable for novices, but professionals ensure a quicker turnaround time, and many businesses offer start-to-finish services.

## Wood

Nothing compares with the gorgeous natural character of real wood, not even the best laminates. Though undoubtedly more expensive than the other three options, using wood for kitchen cabinet refacing is still 50-60% cheaper than replacing the cabinets entirely. Almost any type of wood, including maple, oak, pine and cherry, is available, and it adds a richness that is timeless.

## The Cost of Cabinet Refacing



You might be pleasantly surprised by the cost of cabinet refacing.

Kitchen cabinets are an expensive investment, often costing up to a third or more of the renovation budget. But cabinet refacing offers another option for any homeowner looking for beautiful results at a reduced price. Below, discover how the cost of cabinet refacing pales in comparison to that of cabinet replacement, and which one better suits your plans.

People update their kitchens for many reasons, but the two most commonly cited are: to increase the value of the home and to improve the overall style. Regardless of the purpose, if you're considering updating an older kitchen you should first understand all the costs inherent to the project.

## The Cost of Replacement

The first thing you should look at is the proposed cost of replacing your current cabinets. It always helps to know what all the options are, and if you price out a complete renovation you'll have a better idea where you need to trim costs.

A typical cabinet replacement will cost roughly one third of your total renovation budget. What does that mean in real dollars? That depends on the specifics of your kitchen, the size of the space and the quality of the wood.

There are times when a replacement is necessary. If your current cabinets are deteriorating or damaged beyond simple repair, it's ultimately less expensive to replace because of the amount of labour that would be required to properly reface.

Another instance where refacing is not financially advantageous is in bathrooms where replacing a full vanity tends to be fairly affordable.



## Other Ways to Save



If you find that a cabinet refacing is still too rich for your budget, there are a few other ways you can slash costs and still have a beautiful kitchen. Though most people opt to update their hardware—aged door handles, hinges and pulls can date a kitchen—there’s no reason why you can’t reuse your old finishings if they still look good. There are many tutorials online showing how one may spruce up old metal to give it a brand new shine if yours are looking a little worse for the wear. Additionally, you can opt out of design features, such as crown moulding, specialty shelves or under cabinet lighting, for a more streamlined look and reduced cost.

## Get a Consultation

If you’re interested in investigating refacing further, [contact us for a consultation](#). We’ll be able to provide you numerous design options, and an accurate quote.

