

# Cabinet Maintenance



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## *Understanding Your Cabinets*

The first step to maintaining your cabinets is to understand their quality and durability. The level of cabinet quality, as in all products, can vary substantially. Good quality cabinets should be regarded as high-end furniture pieces that are installed in "hard-use" rooms. Therefore, they require the same type of care you would give high-end furniture.

When properly cared for, quality cabinets will retain their beauty and function for many years. Today's cabinets may not only be constructed of solid wood and wood veneers but may also contain a variety of quality engineered products that are durable, attractive, conserve wood and meet all safety and health requirements. Some frequently used surface materials are:

- Melamine (Formica-like) - commonly used for countertops but may also be used for other surfaces.
- Vinyl - may be wood grained or solid colors. May be used for all surfaces except countertops.
- Paper - chemically and finish-treated for durability. May be wood grained or solid colors and used for all surfaces except countertops.

Commonly used panel core materials are: MDF, lumber, wood veneers, flake or particleboard and hardboard.

## *Preparing for Future Maintenance or Repair*

Quality products can be damaged or in time need repair, so when you purchase your cabinets obtain the following items from your cabinet supplier and store them in a permanent location:

1. Several hinges
2. Two or three drawer guidance systems
3. Several pulls
4. A repair kit, if available from the manufacturer

5. A small (pint-size) amount of each stain or color coat used for finishing your cabinets (clear top coats are available in aerosol cans from your local store)
6. The name and address of the cabinet manufacturer and the name of the cabinet style (you may want to add cabinets or replace a damaged part at some future date).

### ***Some Recommended "Do's & Don'ts"***

1. Don't hang wet towels on door or drawer fronts.
2. Don't permit children to swing on doors or use drawers as step ladders. Hinges or drawer guidance systems that are bent or twisted likely cannot be repaired like new.
3. Spills should be cleaned promptly. Most finished surfaces are highly resistant to household foods and liquids; however, prompt cleaning will add assurance.
4. If at some future date you want to paint or refinish your cabinets, be cautious. Many paints are not compatible with cabinet finishes. Severe surface peeling or blistering of the paint could result.

### ***Repair Tips***

1. There are many adhesives available to repair broken wood parts or loose panel surfaces. If properly used, Elmer's Glue (or equivalent) or a contact adhesive can manage most repairs..
2. For small loose areas of wood veneer on edges of doors, etc., or at the edge or corner of panels:
  - Carefully clean all old, dry glue from loose surfaces with a scraper or sandpaper.
  - Apply a thin, uniform coat of Elmer's-type glue to one surface. Press the loose veneer into place and wipe off the excess glue squeezed out. Using a strong tape as a clamp, tape the loose veneer down as tightly as is practical and allow 24 hours for drying before removing the tape.
3. For split or broken wood part:
  - Proceed similarly to repairing wood veneer.
  - For split wood, work glue into the split as deeply as possible, push tightly together, wipe off squeezed-out glue and clamp as tightly as possible with strong tape for 24 hours. If the damaged location will permit the use of a metal screw or other type clamp, you might rent such clamps at the Rent-All location and get more positive clamping action. If removable, such as a drawer, clamping in a vice until dry would be excellent.
  - For a small wood section that is bumped and split completely loose, apply glue to the loose part and carefully tape it to its original position until dry.

4. For small, loose areas of man-made material surfaces or veneers on edges or panel corners:
  - Clean as in 2 above
  - Apply contact adhesive according to instructions on the container and place the loose section firmly in place
5. For a stripped screw as at a door hinge:
  - Remove the screw and clean dust or chips from the hole. Cut wood match sticks to the approximate hole depth. Apply glue to the match sticks and in the hole. Lightly hammer the match sticks into the hole, filling the hole tightly. Allow to dry for 24 hours. After drying, trim the match sticks flush to the surface. Carefully re-drill the screw hole using a drill bit approximately the root diameter (screw base diameter not counting threads) of the screw. The same screw may then be applied, however, a sheet metal screw (local hardware) of the same size will provide better holding power, particularly for repair purposes.
6. Should a machine screw (or bolt) holding a door or drawer pull no longer hold (stripped threads), place a small amount of steel wool around the threads and screw carefully into place without heavy pressure. It may hold.
7. Generally - never use nails for repair. They often split or shatter the wood or particleboard core causing more damage.
8. Never drive a screw into any part or wall without first pre-drilling to the root diameter of the screw.
9. Cabinets or heavy objects screwed to wall panels will not hold satisfactorily. They must be screwed properly to structural studs.
10. Should a pull become broken, or a hinge or drawer guidance system break or not operate properly, replace them from your permanent storage.

## ***Finish Repair***

CAUTION - ALL FINISHING MATERIALS MAY BE HIGHLY FLAMMABLE!

Proper finish repair can be rather highly skilled procedure, particularly since several types of finishing materials including man-made materials, may have been used on your cabinets. However, there are four possible sources of correct repair material:

1. A repair kit from your cabinet manufacturer or supplier.
2. Small cans of color coats from your supplier.

3. Felt tipped pens or finish and/or putty sticks in a wide variety of colors from your hardware or home supply store.
4. Aerosol cans of clear, final top coat spray can be purchased at your hardware or home supply store.

Sprayed-on type standard finishes, which are scratched or lightly dented, can be repaired with these materials. For the inexperienced, practice on a small board or 2x4. Colored putty sticks fill dents with a putty knife. Apply color coats of finish lightly since you can apply more coats to darken to match. Once too dark, colors cannot be easily lightened. Protective top coats are sprayed on last - use according to aerosol can instructions. Practice first, - you may have to "mask" other surfaces to avoid overspray. Be cautious - the sheen or brightness of the topcoat material, when thoroughly dry, may not match your cabinet.