

Cabinet Doors - Measuring for Half-Inch Overlay Replacement Doors

In our prior article we discussed the difference between frameless and face-framed cabinets, and then briefly touched on overlay options for face-framed cabinets. As mentioned there, the two most common overlay options are ½" overlay and 1-1/4" overlay. Here we'll discuss ½" overlay which is probably the most popular and certainly the easiest.

There are a few advantages to using ½" overlay over most of the other choices:

- Doors are smaller and therefore a bit less expensive.
- In corners or other tight areas, you can sometimes get away with less of a filler or no filler. (Note: With larger overlays, you can accomplish the same thing by shrinking the overlay on just the one side of a given door, but that takes more forethought and sometimes requires purchasing a couple different hinge sizes.)
- In small spaces like bathrooms, these smaller doors require less clearance to open.
- It's easier to calculate the sizes.

Let's say you have an upper cabinet that has a single door. For sake of the example, let's say the cabinet size is 18"w x 36"h. (This cabinet is commonly called a W1836.) For determining the door size, however, the cabinet size is not the important measurement: The **opening size** is the key. I think the definition is obvious, but the opening is the part of the frame through which you can reach into the cabinet. (Some cabinets have multiple openings, but we'll talk about that later. We'll assume this cabinet has only one.) In *most* cases, the opening size on this cabinet will be 3" less than the width of the cabinet and 3" less than the height of the cabinet. This is because the left, right, top and bottom framing pieces (called *rails* for the horizontal pieces and *stiles* for the vertical pieces) on most standard cabinets are each 1-1/2" wide. However, don't assume anything! Measure the opening!

After you measure the opening, let's say you find it to be the standard size: 15"w x 33" h. To size the door for that cabinet with a ½" overlay, you'll need to make the door ½" bigger than the opening on each of the four sides: left, right, top and bottom. Combining these measurements, you'll see that the door needs to be 1" bigger than the opening width and 1" bigger than the opening height, or 16"w x 34"h. Pretty easy!

Moving on to a standard door/drawer base cabinet where you have a drawer opening directly above a door opening with a rail (horizontal framing piece) in between, the measurements are the same, assuming the rail is the typical 1-1/2" wide (or at least 1-1/4" wide). Since there's room to fit the ½" overlay from the door and the ½" overlay on the drawer front on that rail and still have room to spare, this will work fine.

The one tricky scenario comes when you have a pair of doors covering a single opening. For example, you may have a 30"w x 36"h wall cabinet with only one opening (commonly, W3036BD or W3036BUTT). The two doors are known as "butt doors" because they (sort of) butt together in the middle. In reality, we would typically leave a 1/8" gap between the

doors to keep them from rubbing. So, when you measure the opening and find it to be 27"w x 33"h, you start with the same calculation which makes the *combined* door size 28"w x 34"h. Since each door will be half the width, divide the width by two making them 14"w x 34"h. Then, to allow for the 1/8" gap, subtract 1/16" from each door. This gives you a final door size of 13-15/16"w x 34"h. (If your door maker doesn't accurately size doors to the nearest 1/16", then find another door maker!)

Regardless of your overlay choice, always be aware of obstacles - walls, corners, appliances, molding, etc. - that could prevent a door or drawer from opening properly. If you encounter any such obstacles, you may have to resize the door or drawer front accordingly.

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