

# Install a Kitchen Countertop

## Checklist

- Post-formed countertop sections
- Drill/driver and bits
- Installation kits/hardware as needed:
  - end splash
  - end cap
  - connecting bolts
- Belt sander and/or block plane
- Putty knife
- 1x lumber for buildup
- Flashlight or work light
- Smooth file
- Wrenches for sink removal
- Hand laminate trimmer or router with flush trimming bit
- Tape measure
- 6" C clamps
- Framing square
- Scribe/compass
- 10- or 12-point handsaw
- Wrench
- Jigsaw
- Matching-color or clear sealant
- Fine up-cutting and down-cutting jigsaw blades
- Caulking gun
- Household iron
- Hammer or rubber mallet
- Carpenter's wood glue
- Heat-conductive aluminum tape
- 1-1/4-in. screws or nails

## One: Prepare the area.

- Remove the drawers and cabinet contents.
- Shut off any water valves.
- Disconnect all piping.
- Remove the sink.
- Refer to appliance installation instructions to determine proper procedures for removing a cooktop or other built-in appliance.
- Remove all screws attaching the cabinet to the underside of the counter.
- Cut any caulk seal between the counter and the wall with the corner of a putty knife before lifting and pulling out the counter.

## Two: Cut section to length.

- If the end of the countertop will butt a wall or end panel, allow a little extra so that you can cut the end to fit to the wall.
- Have the countertop face-up, and apply masking tape over the cut area and pencil a cut line on the tape.
- Verify that the cut is square with a framing square, or carefully measure from a square end.
- Use a fine-tooth handsaw to complete the cut.
  - Cut on the downstroke only.
  - This will avoid chipping the laminate.
  - For accuracy, clamp a board to the top to guide your cut.



You can also use a circular saw with a finish blade allowing you to make a guided cut from the underside.



Fresh-cut laminate is very sharp. Use a smooth file or sanding block to take off the sharp edge with a few shear strokes (down and along the edge simultaneously).

## Three: Install the buildup.

- Put the countertop upside-down.
- Glue strips of wood to the back edge and the ends that are the same thickness, and to the factory-installed front buildup.



## Four: Finish the ends.

- Set a clothing iron at medium heat.
- Use this to apply laminate caps on exposed ends.
- If the end abuts a solid cabinet panel, apply sealant to the end of the counter and screw through the panel into the end of the counter.
- If the end butts a wall, attach a square-corner end splash to the end of the countertop with screws before installing the top.



## Five: Make any cutouts.

- Follow the fixture of appliance-maker's instructions for locating and making the cutout.
- Normally the cutout is made after the top is in place, but when the backsplash is on, it often prevents cutting the back edge.



- ❑ In the picture to the right, the outside perimeter of a sink is being traced and the actual cutout will be 3/8-inch inside that line.
- ❑ Bore a starter hole for the blade well inside the line; and use a fine-tooth stand (up-cutting) jigsaw blade.
- ❑ All corners should be rounded (1/2-inch radius).

**Six: Joint mitered sections.**

- ❑ L and U shaped tops are ordered with precut miters and T-slots milled in the underside for the connecting bolts.
- ❑ Apply a bead of sealant to the connecting edges.
- ❑ Join the edges and tighten the bolts a little at a time.
- ❑ Using a wood block to protect the surface and a rubber mallet, tap the counter to align the two pieces and tighten bolts more.



**Seven: Scribe and secure the top.**

- ❑ Position the counter against the wall so that it overhangs the front edge of the cabinets an equal dimension all along its length.
- ❑ Set a compass to the widest gap between the backsplash and the wall.
  - ❑ With the metal point against the wall and the pencil on top, move the pencil along the wall to make a parallel line on the top. (This technique is called scribing.)
- ❑ Use a belt sander or block plane to remove the scribe edge up to your line.
- ❑ Apply a bead of sealant on the backsplash.
- ❑ Push the counter against the wall.
- ❑ Attach the top from below with screws installed through cabinet corner braces.



**Eight: Reinstall fixtures and/or appliances.**

- ❑ Preinstall the faucet on the sink.
  - It's easier to access the connections before the sink is in place.
- ❑ If installing a cooktop or built-in range, protect the laminate under the lip of the unit with heat-conducting aluminum tape.

