

How to Measure and Template Wood Countertops



Introduction

Proper measuring and templating are very important for properly fitted counters. This is meant to be a guide to help you template and measure your counters so that we can fabricate them for you. The templates will define the shape and dimensions of the final piece.

This document is based on you the consumer having a basic understanding of the terminology involved and is confident to do the installation. A basic understanding of Draftsmanship is also helpful for generating the drawings/templates. If you do not understand the steps we have outlined here, please contact us to help you.

» **When don't I need a template? When can I measure and use a drawing instead?**

Generally speaking simpler shapes such as rectangles, squares or circles that have overhangs don't require a template. The overhangs help hide imperfections in cabinet installation and wall framing. If wall framing is very square and straight or a thick backsplash is to be used, often times you can use drawings for counters that butt up to 1 or 2 non opposing wall sides. Some jobs can be done with a mix of drawings and templates.

You should always check that your actual installed cabinets measure to the specifications. If they do not then you must make adjustments to your drawings to allow for the actual installed size. Always measure at least twice and check your drawings for clerical or mathematical errors before submitting them.

» **When the following are true you need to use a template:**

- When the wall framing is poor out of square or out of line.
- When butting up to rough surfaces, such as natural stone.
- When the counter is constrained on more than 3 sides, this includes sections that are seamed together. For example a long L shaped counter may be made from 2 counters; the angle between the two should be verified for square. If it is not square it should be templated.
- When the counter is constrained on two opposing sides such as a butler's pass though.
- When the shape is very complex and cannot be defined accurately in a drawing.
- When you have a sink, range, faucet or other cutout that is complex. This particularly applies to undermount and apron style sinks.
- When overhangs and or reveals are very small and must be accurate.

» **Materials you'll need to Template:**

The template can be made of any thin stiff material such as thin plywood, Luan, foam board or even cardboard. We rip the material into 3" or 4" strips (make sure they are ripped parallel). The strips should be fastened together with hot glue or some other glue, but it must be strong enough to hold the materials together. A few small clamps are nice to hold the glued pieces together until the joints dry tight. A few finish nails can come in handy to hold the template in place for you. You'll also need a marker and a measuring tape.

Making the Template

These instructions are based around cabinets, but counters over other surfaces also apply.

- 1) Place one long strip onto the back of the cabinets against the wall, this piece will define the back edge of the counter. If the wall is bowed or out of square you may have to scribe the strip to make it fit tightly against the wall. If there is a backsplash that covers the gap scribing is not necessary.
 - 2) Place another strip at the front of the cabinets and allow it to overhang your desired overhang amount. This defines the finished overhang. Check to make sure this piece is parallel to the front of the cabinets.
 - 3) Place two end pieces, cut them so they fit inside the outside edges of the front and back pieces. These again may need to be scribed to fit out of shape walls. Glue these onto the front and back pieces. Add cross pieces to indicate the sink bay or other important features.
 - 4) If there is a special detail such as a curve, you will need to add strips to show these features.
 - 5) Once the key details are indicated add cross pieces to support the template.
 - 6) Mark which side of the template is the top. Also mark which edge is the front and which is the back. You also need to indicate which edges get edge profiling. Indicate square edges finished against stoves, refrigerators etc. This is our guide the more information you can provide the better.
 - 7) If there is an undermount/overmount sink or cook top cutout, indicate the centerline locations side to side and front to back of these features on the template. Then supply us with the factory dimensions or template for these items. Check the factory templates and dimensions against your actual unit. Sometimes, but not often they can be off.
 - 8) If you have an apron sink you will need to set the sink in the final position and make the template around the sink edge. You should allow the counter to overhang the sink by at least 1/8".
 - 9) Large templates should be broken up by making them in pieces and butting two strips together. Datum the two templates together with at least 2 marks.
 - 10) Remove the template, if you can't get it out without bending the template your counter will never fit, if you reach such a situation please contact us so that we can come to a solution together.
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Alternate Templating Methods

Many contractors also feel comfortable using whole pieces of plywood, cardboard and Tyvex for their templates. The same rules apply as above, but more time will need to be spent fitting the solid template to the area. The distinct advantage of this method in cardboard or Tyvex is the template can be folded up and mailed much more easily than the larger solid templates.

About Scribing

Because the counters are wood, they can be ordered larger and scribed or trimmed on site. On some jobs this is the only way to go. Scribing should be done by trade professionals familiar with such tasks. It is not for the average do- it- yourselfer. When generally recommend against this, but it is sometime the only option.

Closing

Be diligent with the creation of your drawings and templates and your counters will literally drop into place. If you need help please contact us, and we can talk you through the process. Make sure you double check your measurements and templates to fit, better to find out now than later.

