

Kitchen

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Improve your cabinets' style

If your cabinets are structurally sound, you can improve their appearance dramatically by refinishing or refacing them. Whichever technique you choose, consider replacing the knobs, pulls, and hinges to match the new look.

Refinishing: More work, less money. A fresh coat of paint or stain can make cabinets look new again. It's inexpensive but messy and time-consuming. You must clean the cabinets with a degreasing agent, rinse, sand, and prime them, and then give them a top coat or two. For best results, remove the cabinet doors and work on them outdoors or in a well-ventilated room. If the cabinets are finished with a paint that contains lead, as was common before 1978, this job is best left to a professional. (Learn more about [dealing with lead paint.](#)) Unless the cabinets are antiques, the extra work involved and the added cost might not be worth it.

Cost: \$50 per door opening and up.

Refacing: More options, more money. This solution involves adding new "skins" to cabinets. It tends to work best on cabinets with visible face frames, although you can reface full-overlay cabinets as well. Choices include brightly colored laminates, crisp white thermofoil, and wood veneers. New doors, drawer faces, and ends are also added. Peel-and-stick kits are available at home centers, or you can hire a cabinet refacing pro, who will need a few days to complete an average-sized job. But costs can creep up if you move cabinets or add new ones.

Cost: \$150 to \$300 per door opening, including materials and installation.

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FACE-LIFT New white cabinet doors and sides (below) freshen up a dark kitchen.

Photographs by Dreamwork Kitchens

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