

Install a Kitchen Countertop

Nothing spruces up a kitchen better, faster, and easier than a new post-formed countertop. This type of top has an easy-to-clean rounded front edge and integrated backsplash. Your home center sells straight sections in various lengths and can have its fabricator pre-cut miters for L- or U-shaped layouts. Bring a sketch with very accurate dimensions or eliminate any risk by taking advantage of the dealer's professional measuring services. Once the top has been cut to size, you can begin installation.



Materials List

- Drill/driver and bits (rental items)
- Belt sander and/or block plane (rental items)
- Jigsaw (rental item)
- Post-formed countertop sections
- Installation kits/hardware as, end splash, end cap & connecting bolts
- 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
- 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

1. Prepare the Area

When you have the new countertop in hand, as well as a free day and a willing helper; remove the drawers and cabinet contents. Shut off any water valves, disconnect all piping, and 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. Before you lift and pull out the counter, cut any caulk seal between the counter and the wall with the corner of a putty knife blade or similar tool.

2. Cut Section to Length

If the end will butt a wall or an end panel; allow a little extra so you can cut the end to fit it to the wall. With the countertop face-up, 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 by carefully measuring from a square end. Use a fine-tooth handsaw to complete the cut. You must cut on the down stroke only, to avoid chipping the laminate. For added accuracy, clamp a board to the top to guide your cut.

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



CAUTION: 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).

3. Install the Buildup

Place the countertop upside-down and glue strips of wood (called buildup) to the back edge and the ends that are the same thickness, and to the factory-installed front buildup.

4. Finish the Ends

Use a clothing iron set at medium heat 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 you install the top.

5. Make Any Cutouts

Follow the fixture- or 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. Here the outside perimeter of a sink is being traced and the actual cutout will be 3/8-in. inside that line. Bore a starter hole for the blade well inside the line; and use a fine-tooth standard (up-cutting) jigsaw blade. All corners should be rounded (1/2-in. radius).

6. Join 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 mating 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.

7. Scribe and Secure the Top

Position the counter against the wall so it overhangs the front edge of the cabinets an equal dimension all along its length. Set a scribe/compass to the widest gap between the backsplash and the wall; with the metal point against the wall and the pencil on the top, move the pencil along the wall to mark a parallel line on the top (a technique called scribing). Then use a belt sander (preferable) 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, and attach the top from below with screws installed through cabinet corner braces.

8. Reinstall Fixtures and/or Appliances

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