

It seems simple to plan a kitchen on paper, but when you look at the sizes, it's not. Then the questions start to pile up. How deep should the cabinets be? Does that include the part of the counter that hangs over? What about the upper cabinets? Do they have different rules? If your kitchen is small, can you make it shallower without ruining its use?

The depth of the cabinets is one of those measurements that has an effect on almost everything else in the kitchen. If you do it right, the countertop feels big, the appliances fit without any awkward gaps, and the space flows naturally. If you don't do it right, your kitchen will either be too small to work in or so deep at the counter that reaching the back of the worktop will be a stretch.

This guide tells you what the standard sizes are, what they mean in real life, and how to think about depth when your kitchen doesn't fit the standard mold.

What Is the Standard Kitchen Base Cabinet Depth?

A standard kitchen base cabinet is 24 inches deep, which is about 61 centimeters or 610 millimeters. This measurement is from the front face of the cabinet to the back panel and shows how deep the cabinet carcass is.

That number of 24 inches is not random. It was made to fit the sizes of standard kitchen appliances, like dishwashers and undercounter refrigerators, which are almost always made to fit a 24-inch deep cabinet opening. It also has to do with the human body: a cabinet depth of 24 inches plus a countertop that usually hangs over the cabinet face by about 1 inch gives a worktop depth of about 25 to 25.5 inches. Most adults can comfortably reach across that depth without having to lean in an awkward way.

The total depth from the wall to the front edge of a fully assembled base cabinet unit is usually between 25 and 26 inches. This includes the thickness of the cabinet door and the overhang of the countertop.

Standard Kitchen Base Cabinet Depth in Different Units

For people who work with different measurement systems, the same standard means:

Measurement Standard Base Cabinet Depth

Inches	24 inches
Centimeters	approximately 61 cm
Millimeters	approximately 610 mm

Sometimes, European kitchen makers work to a slightly different standard. The standard depth for base cabinets in continental Europe is 60 cm (600 mm), which is a little less than the US standard of 610 mm. In most cases, this 10 mm difference doesn't matter, and European-specification cabinets fit standard US countertop depths without any problems.

Standard Kitchen Cabinet Sizes in mm and cm

The size of kitchen cabinets includes more than just the depth of the base. Knowing how all the standard sizes fit together will help you design a kitchen that works as a whole system instead of a bunch of separate pieces.

Base Cabinets

Base cabinets are the units that sit on the floor and hold up the countertop. In the US market, their standard sizes are as follows:

Depth: 24 inches (610 mm / 61 cm) **Height:** 34.5 inches (876 mm / 87.6 cm) without countertop. With a standard 1.5-inch countertop, total height reaches 36 inches (914 mm / 91.4 cm), which is the industry-standard kitchen worktop height. **Width:** Base cabinet widths are modular and typically range from 9 inches to 48 inches in 3-inch increments. Common widths are 12, 15, 18, 24, 30, and 36 inches.

Upper or Wall Cabinets

The depth of kitchen wall cabinets is not the same as that of base cabinets. To keep them within easy reach and not block the view and work space below, upper cabinets are shallower.

Standard kitchen wall cabinet depth: 12 inches (305 mm / 30.5 cm) in the US. Some manufacturers offer 13 or 14-inch deep upper cabinets for additional storage.

Height: Upper cabinet heights vary more than base cabinets. Standard options are

12, 15, 18, 24, 30, 36, and 42 inches tall, depending on ceiling height and design preference.

Width: Upper cabinets follow the same modular width system as base cabinets.

The space between the top of the upper cabinets and the countertop is usually 18 inches (457 mm). This is the best ergonomic spot because it keeps the things in the upper cabinet within reach while still leaving enough space below for food prep and small appliances.

IKEA Kitchen Cabinet Depth: How It Compares

The SEKTION kitchen system from IKEA is one of the most popular modular kitchen ranges in the US. Its sizes are very close to industry standards, but there are a few IKEA-specific differences that you should be aware of.

The depth of IKEA's standard base cabinets is 24 inches, which is the same as the US industry standard. Their upper cabinets are 15 inches deep, which is a little deeper than the 12-inch standard that many other companies use. The extra 3 inches give upper cabinets more storage space, which is usually seen as a good thing. However, it does bring the cabinet face a little closer to the countertop below.

IKEA also has a 15-inch deep base cabinet option in their SEKTION line. This is meant for specific layout situations, like kitchen islands or peninsula units, where one side needs to be shallower to make room for seating.

One thing to think about when it comes to the depth of IKEA kitchen cabinets is that their systems are made to work with their own drawer hardware and fittings. Before you buy, make sure that the face frame and hinges of the IKEA carcasses you are mixing with non-IKEA doors or drawer fronts are compatible.

Shallow Base Cabinet Depth: When 24 Inches Does Not Work

The 24-inch standard is good for a full-size kitchen with enough floor space. The standard depth can take up too much floor space in a narrow galley kitchen, a small

apartment kitchen, or a utility room with cabinets. This can make the room feel too small.

In these cases, a shallow base cabinet depth of 18 inches (457 mm) is a well-known option. Base cabinets that are 18 inches deep are often used in laundry rooms, small kitchenettes, and narrow galley layouts where the aisle between facing runs of cabinets would otherwise be less than 42 inches wide, which is the minimum comfortable working width.

What You Gain and Lose With an 18-Inch Base Cabinet

Gain: More space on the floor and in the aisles. The kitchen doesn't feel as closed in. Without the runs of cabinetry crowding the aisle, it's easier to fit standard appliances on the other wall.

Lose: The amount of storage space is much less than in a 24-inch cabinet. Dishwashers and standard undercounter refrigerators won't fit in an 18-inch deep run without a specially made compact appliance. This limits your choices and usually makes appliances more expensive.

If you want to have 18-inch base cabinets in your kitchen, you should choose your appliances early and double-check the sizes. There are small dishwashers that are made for shallower installations, but they are not as common as standard full-size dishwashers.

Built-In Cabinet Depth: A Different Set of Rules

Built-in cabinets, like those in a kitchen, utility room, or home office, have the same depth rules as regular kitchen cabinets, but they are more flexible because they are usually made to fit the space instead of being put together from modular units.

The depth of a built-in cabinet is mostly determined by what it needs to hold and how far into the room it can stick out. For a built-in pantry or larder unit next to a kitchen run, matching the 24-inch base cabinet depth makes everything look like one piece. A depth of 12 to 16 inches is often better for a built-in cabinet in a hallway or alcove.

If stud spacing and services allow, built-in cabinets can also be recessed into the wall structure. This gives them more depth without sticking out into the room. People often use this method in older homes with thick walls, and sometimes in new homes where the extra structural work is needed to meet a certain depth requirement.

How Cabinet Depth Affects Your Kitchen Layout

You don't make the choice about cabinet depth on your own. It changes the way things work, the way the space feels, and a number of other measurements that affect the whole kitchen plan.

Aisle Width

The aisle width between two runs of cabinets or between cabinets and an island is the most important spatial relationship in a kitchen layout. The standard minimum size for a kitchen for one person is 42 inches. The best minimum size for a kitchen where two cooks work at the same time is 48 inches.

If your kitchen is 8 feet wide between the walls and you put 24-inch-deep cabinets on both sides, you'll have 48 inches of aisle space. This is enough space to work, but not a lot. When you lower the cabinets on one side to 18 inches, the aisle opens up to 54 inches, which feels much more comfortable.

Island Depth

Most kitchen islands have a working side that is 24 inches deep, but some have a working side that is 25 or 26 inches deep to give you more space to work. If there is seating on one side of the island, the seating overhang needs an extra 12 to 15 inches of countertop projection beyond the cabinet face. This can be done by extending the countertop or by using a shallower 15-inch cabinet on the seating side.

Appliance Integration

All standard built-in appliances, like dishwashers, undercounter refrigerators, wine coolers, and drawer freezers, are made to fit a cabinet opening that is 24 inches deep. If you want to include these appliances in a run with shallower cabinets, you'll need either a purpose-built shallow appliance or a recessed panel arrangement to

make the appliance face flush with the shallower cabinet fronts. Both of these options make things more complicated and expensive.

Choosing the Right Kitchen Unit Depth

Most kitchens do better with base cabinets that are 24 inches wide and upper cabinets that are 12 inches wide. These sizes are good for most layouts, most appliances, and most body types.

In some cases, it makes sense to go against standard sizing. A small kitchen with a narrow aisle that really limits the space. A custom-built installation that makes the most of the available space by adjusting its depth. A design brief that asks for upper cabinets that are not very deep to make the kitchen feel more open and airy.

Before making a final decision about the depth, draw the kitchen plan to scale and mark the aisle widths at their narrowest points. That one step stops most depth-related problems before they turn into costly mistakes.

For practical guidance on planning and renovating kitchen spaces, the [home improvement guides at Home Narratives](#) cover a wide range of topics to help you make confident decisions throughout the process.

The [National Kitchen and Bath Association](#) publishes detailed kitchen planning guidelines including recommended clearances, aisle widths, and cabinet dimension standards that are widely used by professional kitchen designers across the industry.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the standard kitchen base cabinet depth?

The standard kitchen unit depth cabinet is 24 inches, which is about 610 mm or 61 cm. This is the measurement of the cabinet carcass from front to back, not including the overhang on the countertop. The total depth from the wall to the front edge of a standard countertop is usually between 25 and 25.5 inches.

What is the standard kitchen unit depth?

In the US, the standard depth for kitchen wall or upper cabinets is 12 inches (305 mm / 30.5 cm). Some companies make upper cabinets that are 13 or 14 inches deep, which is a little deeper. The SEKTION upper cabinets from IKEA are 15 inches deep, which is a little deeper than the industry standard.

What is a shallow base cabinet depth?

A shallow base cabinet is usually 18 inches (457 mm) deep, which is less than the standard 24 inches. In narrow kitchens, galley layouts, laundry rooms, and small kitchenettes, shallow base cabinets are used to keep the aisle width as wide as possible while still providing enough storage space.

What is IKEA kitchen cabinet depth?

The base cabinets from IKEA SEKTION are 24 inches deep, which is the same as the US industry standard. The upper cabinets are 15 inches deep, which is a little more than the usual 12 inches. IKEA also sells base cabinets that are 15 inches deep for use on islands and peninsulas.

What is standard kitchen cabinet depth in cm and mm?

The standard depth of a base cabinet is about 61 cm or 610 mm. The standard depth for an upper cabinet is about 30.5 cm or 305 mm. European kitchen makers usually use a base cabinet size of 60 cm (600 mm), which is a little shallower but works with standard countertop sizes.

Can I use 18-inch deep base cabinets in a full kitchen?

Yes, but there are some trade-offs. An 18-inch base cabinet depth cuts down on storage space a lot and makes it impossible to use standard undercounter appliances like dishwashers, which need a 24-inch opening. It works well in small kitchens where the width of the aisles is important, but you need to plan the appliances carefully from the beginning of the design process.

What does the depth of the base cabinet do to the size of the

countertop?

At the front, the countertop usually hangs over the cabinet face by about 1 inch, and at the back, it goes all the way to the wall. So, a base cabinet that is 24 inches deep will make a countertop that is about 25 to 25.5 inches deep. A base cabinet that is only 18 inches deep makes a countertop that is about 19 to 19.5 inches deep, which is not as good for preparing food.

One of the most important choices you make when planning a kitchen is how deep the cabinets will be. The 24-inch standard is there because it works well in most situations. However, knowing what makes that number work and when to ignore it gives you a lot more power, whether you're planning a full kitchen renovation or just replacing a few base units.

Are you working with the standard dimensions for your kitchen layout, or are you making changes to fit a specific need? The answer to that question usually tells you what depth choice is best for your room.