

Step-by-Step Application

Installing a Recessed Cabinet

A recessed medicine cabinet makes good use of empty space between wall studs. The surround of a recessed cabinet is only 3-1/2" to 4" deep. These cabinets typically need little in the way of support because they are attached directly to the adjacent studs, or to blocking. The easiest installation will be on an interior, non-bearing wall as described below. Avoid installation on an exterior wall because the cabinet will displace insulation. Recessed cabinets are generally installed after the drywall has been installed and finished.

Step 1 Plan the cuts. The bottom of a medicine cabinet is usually about 40 in. above the floor. Establish a level line at this point, then a vertical centerline. Use these references to lay out the perimeter of the hole based on dimensions provided by the cabinet manufacturer. Generally, however, 1/4 in. of clearance is needed at sides, top and bottom.

Step 2 Locate studs. Use an electronic stud finder or some other method to locate studs within the cut area, if any.

Step 3 Locate other obstructions. Cut power to nearby outlets and fixtures, then saw a 5 in. square inspection hole on each side of any stud within the cut area. The inspection holes should be within the layout lines. Proceed cautiously and use shallow cuts. Then check inside the wall for obstructions such as plumbing vents, water pipes, drain lines and ductwork. Wiring is less of a problem because it can often be pushed to one side.

Step 4 Cut the hole. Protect the vanity with cardboard. Wear a dust mask. Then cut along the layout lines, remove the drywall or plaster, and use a handsaw or power saw to cut through an obstructing stud (avoid cutting into the drywall on the other side of the wall). Use a hacksaw blade to sever any nails or screws holding the cut stud to the drywall behind.

Step 5 Install blocking. Screw 2x4 blocking between the studs above and below the opening. Screw additional blocking to the studs on each side as needed. Screw the loose edges of the drywall to the blocking.

Step 6 Mount the cabinet. Slip the cabinet into place. Hold it flat against the wall, then drive a screw through one side and into the blocking. Level the cabinet and install the remaining screws. A typical cabinet requires at least 4 screws for support. Screws with color-coated heads are sometimes supplied. In other cases, screw heads can be concealed with plastic caps.