

# Upgrade to a Trash Drawer

Installed in an **existing cabinet**,

BY REX ALEXANDER

After I've built and installed a custom kitchen, the feature that gets the most praise isn't the finish, the way I've carefully aligned the grain patterns, or the consistent reveals around the doors and drawers. It's always the pullout trash drawer, and for good reason. Not only does the trash drawer hide refuse and recyclables, but it also helps to contain the odor that can come from an empty cat-food can or the grease from last night's dinner.

The best aspect of this design is that it can be an easy upgrade to integrate a drawer into an existing cabinet, preferably in or near the sink base. Once you've built the drawer, it's only a matter of removing the cabinet door and installing new drawer slides. Commercially produced versions are available, but why spend the money when you can do it yourself for a few bucks?

The materials are easy to find in any home center or lumberyard. I've found that a good size for the plastic wastebasket is about 10 in. wide, 14 in. deep, and 16 in. tall, which leaves enough room for a drawer above. For drawer slides, I use simple epoxy-coated, side-mount models from Blum ([www.blum.com](http://www.blum.com)). They are inexpensive, but they're rated for 100 lb. If you choose a different type of slide, be sure to determine the necessary clearance before building the trash drawer. □

Cabinetmaker Rex Alexander lives in Brethren, Mich. Photos by Charles Bickford.



it's simple and sturdy, and it hides disposables only a slide away

## BUILD THE DRAWER

**1 Use simple joinery.** Made from ½-in. birch plywood, the trash unit is essentially a drawer turned upside down, reinforced with an angled support, and attached to the cabinet door. Start by cutting the sides for the drawer and joining them with biscuits.

**2 Make a pattern.** Make a cardboard template that fits snugly beneath the outside rim of the wastebasket; the templated hole is traced onto the top. After drilling a hole for blade access, cut out the basket hole with a jigsaw. Use a 4-in-1 rasp or sandpaper to clean up the edges for a final fit. Nail and glue the top into place flush with the top edges of the drawer.

## SUPPORT THE DOOR

**3 Lock in the brackets.** Notch the angled drawer supports on the front and back so that they slide inside the drawer. Fasten them with 1-in. screws.

**4 Attach the backing.** Cut the front panel, then glue and nail it between the angled supports. Drill four ¼-in. holes, two in the drawer front and two in the front panel for the screws that attach the drawer to the cabinet door.

Existing cabinet door

Wastebasket  
(approximately  
10 in. wide by 14 in.  
deep by 16 in. tall)

Drawer

Veneer tape hides  
plywood edges.

## HANG IT IN THE CABINET

### 5 Make a drawer-slide jig.

Before you install drawer slides, make a jig from ¼-in. medium-density fiberboard (MDF) or plywood. Drill holes that correspond to those on the slides, and attach the jig to a small block at one end. With the jig aligned to the slides' position, use an awl to start pilot holes for the mounting screws. Note: In face-frame cabinets, you can screw spacers to the cabinet sides as the author is doing here, or you can use a slide hanger, as seen on the back of the slide above.

### 6 Use tape and shims to install the door.

Drill ¼-in. holes in the drawer box's front face and near the bottom of the front panel. Attach heavy-duty double-stick carpet tape to the front of the unit. Lay shims of the intended reveal thickness (usually about ⅛ in.) along the bottom of the cabinet opening. Remove the backer on the tape, position the door on the shims, and push the door onto the tape. After checking the reveals on the sides, ease out the drawer, and screw the door to the unit from inside.

