

# The Basic Elements and Design Styles

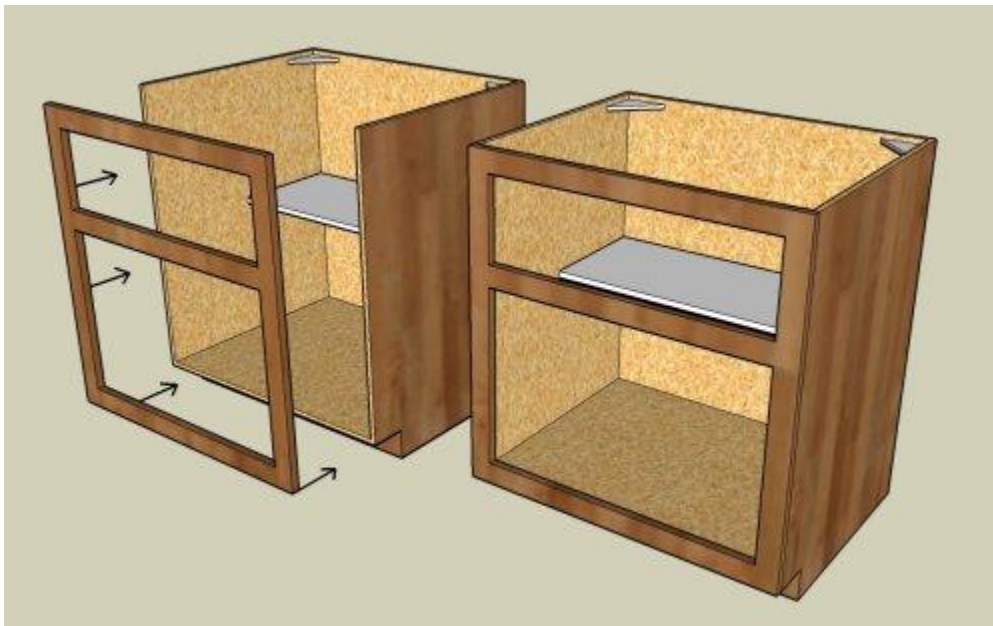
## Framed and Frameless Construction

Kitchen cabinet construction varies among manufacturers but they all conform to 2 basic design styles. These styles or design types are called *framed* and *frameless*. Framed cabinets are also called face-frame cabinets so you may see them referred to both ways. There's not too much difference between the two styles in the way they're constructed. What's different is how they look and the amount of accessibility you have to the inside of the cabinet.

### **Framed Cabinet Construction**

Framed cabinets incorporate a wood 'frame' around the front outer edge of the cabinet box. That's in contrast to a frameless cabinet which doesn't have this feature.

If you visualize a basic wood box, the face frame is made up of several pieces of wood that are fastened to the forward edge of the cabinet, framing the cabinet box. The outside edges of the frame are flush with the outside surfaces of the cabinet box whereas the inside portion of the frame extends past the inside edges of the box slightly. The face frame provides some rigidity to the cabinet box, helping it to remain square and sturdy.



### **Example of the basic structure of a framed cabinet**

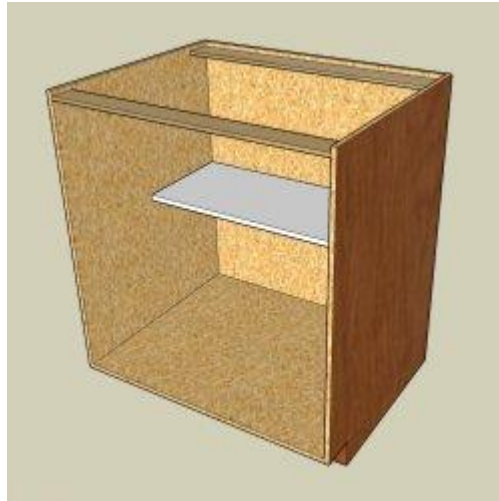
Framed cabinet construction is generally considered more traditional looking and offers some style variety based on the amount of door overlay. Door overlay just means the extent to which the door covers or "lays-over" the face frame.

- **Full-overlay** means the doors and drawers completely cover the face frame
- **Partial-overlay** simply means that the doors and drawers cover only part of the frame.
- **Full-inset** means the doors and drawers are made to fit within the face frame opening.

Different manufacturers offer varying styles in the extent of door-to-frame overlay.

## Frameless Cabinet Construction

Frameless cabinets on the other hand offer a bit more accessibility than framed cabinets. This is because there's no inside edge of a frame that's partially blocking the perimeter of the cabinet opening. The amount of storage space in frameless-construction drawers is greater than with framed cabinet construction because the drawer box is bigger for a given cabinet size (in other words, the drawer box has to be smaller on framed cabinets to fit through the face frame opening).



### Example of frameless cabinet construction

Frameless cabinet construction is often described as a "European" style of cabinet. Cabinet doors are typically full-overlay (covering the entire front edges of the cabinet box) though some can be made as full-inset. With full-inset designs the edges of the cabinet box are usually finished with a wood or laminate veneer or some other material to mask the raw edges of the cabinet box.

So what's the significance of these differences in cabinet construction? Not too much, other than some style differences and a little less accessibility to the inside of framed cabinets. They both work well and just evolved from different design traditions.

### Base/Wall/Tall Cabinets

Beyond framed and frameless design, the other primary elements of cabinet construction to be aware of are their basic units or "building blocks". These are the predominant components that your cabinets will be comprised of.

- **Base cabinets** are the cabinets mounted on the floor that usually support the countertops. Kitchen islands are also a form of base cabinet and can be a combination of several base cabinets joined together or a custom-made base.
- **Wall cabinets** as their name implies are mounted on the wall, with no connection to the floor. They're typically located above the countertops and stoves/ovens.
- **Tall/pantry cabinets** are essentially tall base cabinets. They stand on the floor and may be free-standing or attached to other wall and/or base cabinets.