



Hidden Drawer Slides

by David Frane

Builders tend to rely on their cabinetmaker to choose drawer slides for their custom cabinets. The limitation to this approach is that most cabinetmakers find a couple of brands of slides and stick with them. If the client doesn't like the cabinetmaker's choice, there can be problems after installation.

The most common standard slide is the epoxy-coated roller slide, which comes in partial- and full-extension versions. These are fastened to the side of the drawer and look quite obtrusive to some people.

But if you research the hardware that's available, you can make sure your clients are offered something more than the standard choices. Here are a few unusual slides worth knowing about.

Undermount Slides

A few years back, some companies started making high-quality slides that mounted under the drawers where they couldn't be seen. I first discovered these when building a cherry vanity with dovetailed drawers. The vanity looked more like a piece of furniture than a cabinet, so visible slides were out. The slides I used were Blum's Tandem series, which mount under drawers and run on a series of nylon rollers (see Figure 1). These slides have a slick self-closing feature that pops the

drawer shut with a spring action when it gets within 2 inches of full closure.

Tandem slides are no harder to install than side-mount slides. Adjustment screws let you properly align the front edges of the drawer boxes.

Another invisible slide is Hettich's Quadro. It runs on ball bearings — making it quieter than a nylon slide — and comes in partial- and full-extension models. Mepla makes the Dynamic slide, an undermount ball-bearing slide similar to the Quadro.

Invisible slides aren't cheap. While a side-mount full-extension ball-bearing slide costs only \$12, a pair of invisible full-extension slides goes for around \$35.

Metal Drawer Boxes

Manufacturers of stock cabinets save money by making drawers from melamine or vinyl-wrapped particle-board. But you can get drawers that cost less than wood drawers but look and wear better than melamine or vinyl-wrapped drawers by using a metal drawer slide that also doubles as the sidewall of the drawer itself (Figure 2).

The product I'm most familiar with is Blum's Metabox. The Metabox's outer half fastens to the cabinet and is identical to the outer half of a standard



Figure 1. Standard, side-mounted drawer slides are inexpensive, but are unattractive on a traditionally styled cabinet. Invisible slides solve the problem by mounting beneath the drawer where they can't be seen.

roller slide; its inner half is a combination drawer slide and drawer side-wall that screws to a $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch melamine bottom and back. The drawer front doubles as the front of the box, and adjustment screws on the clips that hold the front to the sides let you tweak the drawer fronts up and down for a proper fit.

One of the nice things about this system is that once you have assembled the drawer, it's ready to install. Metabox hardware comes in anodized aluminum and cream-colored epoxy-coated steel.

The Metabox line also includes specialty slides and accessories. The Gallery system consists of rods that run from drawer front to drawer back, along with adjustable cross-supports that clip to rods, letting you subdivide the drawer's interior. It's great for holding bottles and jars.

The Metafile system consists of a special clip and rails that hold hanging files. I first used it in an architect's office as an economical way to build sleek-looking file drawers.

Metal drawer box hardware is more expensive than simple roller slides. A pair of 20-inch, partial-extension epoxy-coated roller slides costs around \$4; a 20-inch partial-extension Metabox drawer set goes for \$12, and a full-extension set for around \$30. Hanging file hardware costs an additional \$9 per drawer. But though you pay a premium, you save the cost of the drawer box, and it only takes a few minutes to assemble a drawer. The cost of the melamine back and bottom is negligible.

Hettich's drawer system, Profitech Plus, incorporates the invisible Quadro slides into aluminum drawer boxes and gives you the option of subdividing drawer interiors with special rails. Mepla's version of this type of hardware is called the SDS (for Steel Drawer System). Any of these products will make a good cabinet even better. ■

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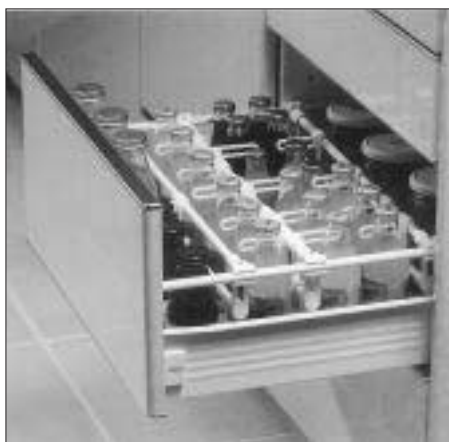


Figure 2. Metal box hardware combines the drawer slide and drawer sides in one unit (top). Accessories and specialty models are available to divide the drawer in various ways (above).

Sources of Supply

Grass America
P.O. Box 1019
Cartersville, NC 27284
910/996-4041

Hettich America
1607 Anaconda Rd.
Harrisonville, MO 64701
816/380-3456

Julius Blum Inc.
Hwy. 16-Lowesville
Stanley, NC 28164
800/438-6788

Mepla Inc.
909 W. Market Center Dr.
High Point, NC 27260
800/456-3752