

Trimming Bifold Doors

Bifold doors are typically used for closets in areas where space doesn't permit the full swing of a standard door. The most economical installations feature hollow-core doors with a shiny metal

by Rick Bessette

track across the top of the opening. Occasionally the track is covered with a quarter-round molding. Either way, the finished installation doesn't match that of the other doors in the house, and the doors tend to look and feel flimsy. That may be okay in a laundry room, but for an entry hall, for instance, where the bifolds are in plain view, I prefer a detail that allows me to match the look of standard hinged doors. It's easy and doesn't take any extra time, as long as you frame accordingly and order the right-size doors.

The Right Doors

The problem with stock bifold kits is that the door panels are trimmed to around 6 feet 7 inches to allow for the track and still have the unit fit in a standard 6-foot-8-inch finish opening. For my detail to work, the bifold door blanks have to be a full 6 foot 8 inches tall.

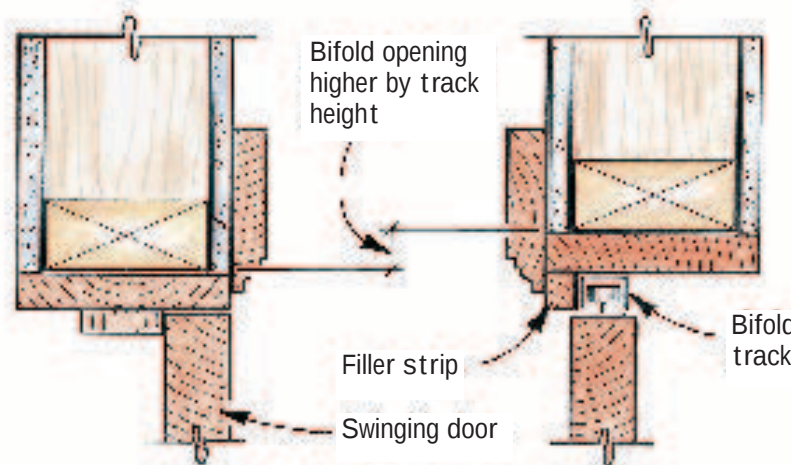
There are a couple of options. My preference is to simply use narrow interior door slabs joined with bifold hinges. Doors from 1 foot to 1 foot 6 inches wide will substitute for bifold panels, although some edge trimming may be necessary to match standard finish opening sizes. I use full 1³/₈-inch-thick interior doors: They have a more solid feel than the typical 1-inch or 1¹/₄-inch bi-fold panels. The only possible drawback to this approach is that standard

doors side by side do not look like a bifold, because the stiles are full width. But since my detail is partly intended to downplay the presence of a bifold door, to many clients this will seem like an advantage.

The second option is to special order a bifold unit with full-height 6-foot-8-inch panels. Many bifold manufacturers

Installation Tips

If possible, have the hardware and the doors on hand before you frame the rough opening. For this detail, don't frame the bifold openings as you would a standard door: The top of the R.O. should be higher by the height of the metal track — usually ⁵/₈ or ³/₄ inch. Lay out the framing so the bot-



make the doors full height, then trim them. The trick is to get your lumberyard to special-order an *untrimmed* unit. It usually takes some explaining to get across what it is you're after. The usual reaction is, "But our bifolds are already made for 6-foot-8-inch openings." A sketched detail is the best way to make the point.

If you're already buying high-quality doors from a company that offers some customization, the upcharge for the special order may be minimal. If you're buying from a company that carries only stock sizes, the percentage cost of the special order will go up. Avoid prepackaged and prehung bifold units — these always use the shorter panels.

tom of the track will be even with the bottom of the head jamb of the standard swinging doors.

You can install the track as far forward on the head jamb as you wish — just make sure the face of the doors won't protrude beyond the jamb edges. I usually mount the track either ¹/₂ or ³/₄ inch from the front edge of the finish jamb, then conceal it with a filler strip of the same material as the jamb. The filler comes down flush with the bottom of the track. The head casing will then have the same setback on the filler strip as the head casings on the standard doors. 

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