

BY DAVE HOLBROOK

Aligning Cabinets With Plumbing Rough-ins

Confronted with the task of installing a sink or vanity cabinet, it's tempting to speedily hack out a window in the cabinet's back to accommodate roughed-in plumbing protruding from the drywall, then slide it home. But, I'm of a mind that the interior appearance of a cabinet matters almost as much as the exterior, therefore I take the time to accurately align cabinet cut-outs with the roughed-in piping (1).

The following is a simple method I use to accomplish a precise alignment.

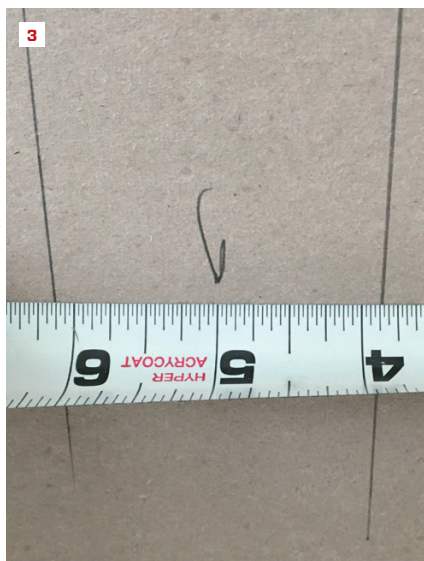
Establishing centerline. I start by determining the cabinet's centerline and mark it on the back of the case (2). Then, I mark the cabinet's centerline on the wall in its final location. These two vertical centerlines serve as my "reference" lines, which I'll measure from to guarantee precise left-right positioning. Next, I make a level line on the wall at the exact final height of the cabinet (minus the countertop thickness), which I use to measure the horizontal centerlines of each protrusion.

With the centerline and top horizontal determined, I then use a torpedo level to outline the sides of each protrusion, both vertically and horizontally, onto the wall. What I'm after is the centerline of each pipe, which I accurately measure between these sidelines (3). After marking center, I using the torpedo level to make a centerline (4).

Now it's a fairly simple matter of measuring between the "reference" centerline and the individual centerlines of the pipes (5). For this, I move away from the hook on my tape and work from the 1-inch-mark, commonly referred to as "burning the edge of the tape". Some say this invites error, but I believe this increases the accuracy when



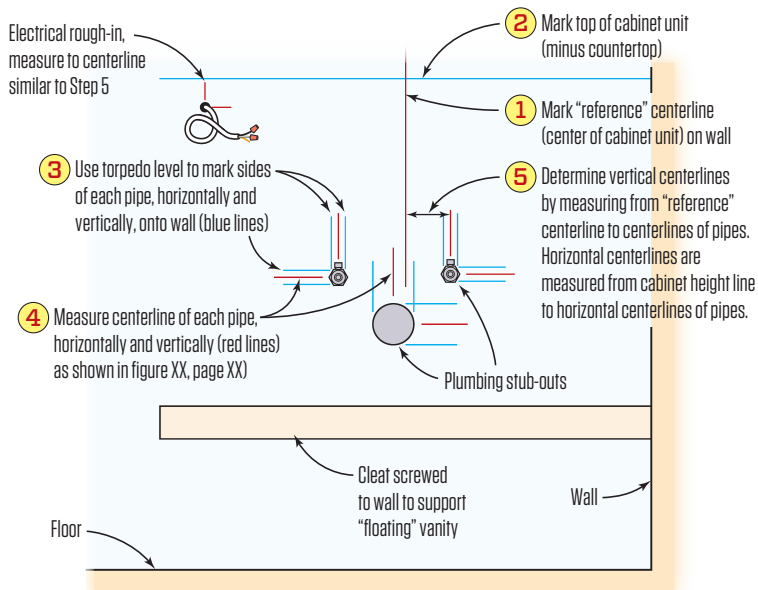
After accurately aligning cabinet cut-outs with roughed-in plumbing, the author assembles a "floating" vanity, (1). A "reference" centerline is marked on the cabinet's back panel with a combo square (2).



After marking outside lines with a torpedo level, the author measures between the two lines to find dead-center. Here, he uses same increment either side of the 4- and 6-inch marks to find centerline, represented by the 5-inch mark (3). The torpedo level is used to make a centerline (4).

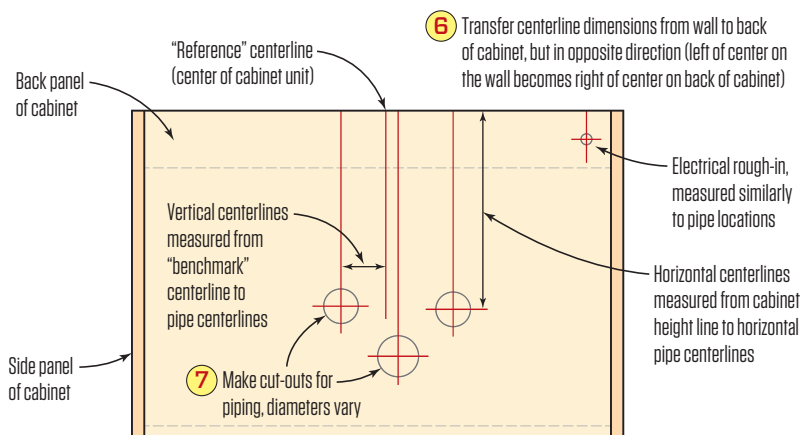


Find Centerlines on Wall



The existing conditions are precisely plotted on the wall (5). Layout marks include; cabinet "reference" centerline, vanity finish location, top of vanity, and plumbing and electrical centerlines (illustration, above).

Transfer Centerline Dimensions to Cabinet



Layout information from the wall is transferred to vanity's back panel, but in opposite direction (illustration, above). Vertical centerlines measured from "reference" centerline to centerlines of pipes. Horizontal centerlines measured from cabinet height line to horizontal centerlines of pipes. A hole saw, going part way through the back panel, is used to make the cut-outs (6).





measuring. Either way, stay focused because every dimension you take from the wall has to be transferred to the back of the cabinet in the opposite direction; left of center on the wall becomes right of center on the cabinet back (6).

Cut-outs. When drilling through the back, I choose a spade bit as close to the pipe diameter as is reasonable, a 3/4-inch hole for a 1/2-inch supply-line pipe and a hole saw for the 2-inch drain pipe (6). When drilling from the back of the cabinet, I stop short of punching through, letting just the tip of the bit go through the back (7). I complete the holes from inside the cabinet, thus avoiding tearout around the holes. With cut-outs completed (8), the vanity cabinet is easily slid into place (9). Electrical boxes inside the cabinet are measured and cut similarly (10).

Stay focused, raise your game, pat yourself on the back.

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Working from the inside, the hole saw punches through the finish face (7). Here, the holes for the supply lines were cut larger to accommodate shut-off valves installed on the stub-outs; valves are typically installed after the cabinet installation (8).



The example vanity cabinet installed. A 1/2-inch hole was made to run power to an outlet on the side of the vanity (9). More typical, “tighter” 3/4-inch holes were cut for 1/2-inch supply-line pipes in another vanity unit (10). Also, an electrical box was cut inside the cabinet (electrical boxes are similarly measured, though cutouts are made with a multi-tool or jigsaw).