

Kitchens | Kitchen Renovations

# Where to Put Your Kitchen Handles

Do they go in the middle of the drawer, on the edge or nowhere at all? Get advice on where to put handles and pulls

**Barbra Bright** 28 March 2017  
Houzz Contributor. San Francisco-based designer who writes about TV kitchens in her... [More](#)

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Renovating a kitchen can be a daunting undertaking. There are so many decisions to make that it's easy to feel overwhelmed. And just when the end of your reno is in sight, your contractor asks one last question: "Where would you like the hardware placed on your cabinetry?"

It probably never occurred to you that there are placement options for your hardware. Like most design options, placement is based on a combination of tried and true design solutions and one's own aesthetic. Let's explore hardware placement so that when your contractor comes asking – and they will – you will be prepared.

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## Lower Cabinetry: Drawers

### Option 1: Centred

The most popular placement is to centre the hardware in the middle of each drawer front. Aesthetically pleasing and symmetrical, the main drawback to this placement is that the bottom drawer can be difficult to reach since the hardware is low.

The first photo shows a five-piece drawer front, also known as a decorative drawer front, which echoes the door style. A five-piece drawer front consists of a centre panel surrounded by a frame. The vertical portion of the frame is called the stile and the horizontal, the rail. Stiles and rails can be of varying widths depending on the door and drawer style you select.

The grey island in this photo also shows centre placement of the hardware in each drawer front. The difference is that the top drawer front is a slab, or flat, style, whereas the lower drawers are decorative. It's not uncommon to mix the two drawer styles to achieve a less formal look.



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### Option 2: Centred on top

In this option, the hardware is centred in the middle of the top drawer only. For all the lower drawers, it is placed on the top rail. Some find this placement visually unbalanced, while others appreciate its blend of form and function.

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Placing the hardware on the rail instead of centring it in the middle of the drawer front makes it easier to open the lower drawers – especially for the taller members of the household.



**Option 3: All on top**

This is my preferred configuration for its symmetry and functionality. The hardware is placed on each rail if the drawer fronts are five-piece.



For a mix of slab and five-piece drawer fronts, as in this photo, the hardware is placed on the top quarter of the slab drawers to mimic their placement on the rails of the decorative fronts.



#### **Option 4: Top one-third**

What if the drawers are all slab? In this photo, the hardware is placed in the top third of each drawer. But because the fronts are slab, there is the added flexibility to place the hardware in the top one quarter, or even to centre it. The choice depends on your own aesthetic.

#### **Option 5: Two-pull placement**

Is there a secret to placing



two pulls on a drawer? Well, here's mine: divide the drawer in half, centre a pull in each half and it will be perfectly balanced. For example, if your drawers are 92 centimetres wide, half of 92 is 46, half of 46 is 23. Therefore, each pull is centred 23 centimetres from the left and right edge of the drawer front.



**Option 6: No hardware**  
I love the clean, seamless look of cabinetry without hardware. Much cabinetry sans hardware uses a magnetic touch latch system to open and close the doors and drawers. Press on the cabinet or drawer and a spring-loaded plunger opens it. Press again and a magnetic catcher holds it closed.

But this modern look comes at a price. The natural oils on your fingertips are transferred to the cabinet's face and will eventually damage its finish where it is repeatedly touched.

Is a handleless kitchen right for you?



### Option 7: Channel system

One option to help avoid degrading the finish with repeated use is an integrated channel system. A channel system offers a clean look with the ability to open base cabinetry without touching the drawer fronts. Instead, you pull on the integrated metal lip.



This photo shows the metal lip of a channel system more clearly.



### Door Cabinetry: Uppers and Lower

Unlike drawer cabinetry, hardware placement for door cabinetry is much more subjective. The knob or pull can align with the rail, or it could be higher, or lower – there are no rules. Well, except for this rule: the hardware spacing for the wall cabinets should match the base cabinets. Let's look at a few options.



### Option 1: Horizontal

If you're looking for a more modern aesthetic, place the hardware horizontally, as in this bamboo kitchen.

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### Option 2: Vertical edging lower rail

In this photo, the hardware for the wall cabinets is centred on the top edge of the lower rail. The pull placement for the lower cabinetry doors mirrors the placement of the uppers.



### Option 3: Vertical extending into rail

Here, the pulls extend into the bottom rail of the wall cabinets and top rail of the base cabinets. This makes for a convenient location to reach, especially for wall cabinets that are a bit higher.



#### Option 4: Mid-way up on stile

This green Shaker-style kitchen places the knobs mid-way up on the stiles of the upper cabinets. It's a great look but perhaps difficult to reach for those who aren't tall.

And the lower door cabinets use different hardware altogether – proving my point that anything goes. Keep in mind that hardware placement is really about what works best for you. Any one of the options we've considered can work. Go with the one you like best and that will also deliver comfortable function.

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How have you configured the handles and pulls for your kitchen cabinets? Share your preferences in the Comments below.

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**LampsUSA**

I really enjoyed the article. I thoroughly savored the visuals. It's like a

symphony, pretty enchanting and relaxing.

Like

15 August 2017 at 2:28am



PRO

**Nate The Cabinet Guy, LLC**

My thoughts after almost 23 years in the biz:

With cup pulls, if you center the holes vertically on the drawer front, the cup will appear to be too high. You have to lower the holes about 3/8" to make the cup look centered. However, this forever commits you to cup pulls because if you go back to regular pulls, they look too low.

Regarding two pulls on wide drawers: Because our blumotion rear brackets free-float side-to-side (a self-adjusting feature), you have to open with both pulls or you will cause the drawer to rack to one side or another. When you close the drawer, you'll have to bump it back into position (drawer front parallel to face frame). I did two bail pulls on our wide drawers, but I have learned to pull one of them at an outward angle to prevent the drawer from racking. It's just a minor annoyance and something else to consider.

Lastly, be warned that if you put knobs or rod-style pulls (or similar) on top drawers, and if you're my height (5' 8"), you'll eventually catch your pants pocket on it. I have ripped many a pants pockets over the years. I like pulls that don't have protrusions that can catch your clothes.

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30 August 2017 at 10:39pm



PRO

**Creative Kitchen and Bath Studio**

Great article. This is a discussion I have with my clients on every project.

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