



FINISHING GUIDE

Painting & Finishing Guide

How to take Brushhollow ready-to-paint cabinets from their 120-grit shop sanding to a durable painted finish.

APPLIES TO

All kitchen cabinets

Sink bases

Blind corners

Drawer banks

Fillers

Entertainment bases, towers and bridges

IN THIS GUIDE

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Brushhollow cabinets are built for paint. A painted finish lasts when the surface is prepared well, primed with the right product, and given time to cure. This guide follows common professional practice. Always follow the instructions on the primer and paint you choose.

1 What you received

- Cabinets are **rough-sanded flat to 120 grit with major blemishes filled. You finish-sand before priming.** Do not prime directly over the 120-grit surface.
- Face frames, door and drawer-front frames, and slab drawer-bank fronts are solid **poplar**.
- Door and drawer-front center panels are **MDF**: 1/4" flat panels or 3/4" raised panels.
- Boxes and shelves are 3/4" nominal **Baltic birch plywood**; backs are 1/4" birch plywood. Drawer boxes are 1/2" Baltic birch.
- Doors and drawer fronts ship undrilled for hardware. Pulls and knobs are not included.

i PAINT, NOT STAIN

Because the center panels are MDF, which does not take stain like solid wood, staining Brushhollow is not recommended.

i YOUR SELF-FINISHING AGREEMENT

At checkout you accept our Self-Finishing Agreement. In short: you are responsible for finish-sanding, priming, painting and sealing all surfaces and edges, and you inspect every item and report any defect **before** you paint or finish.

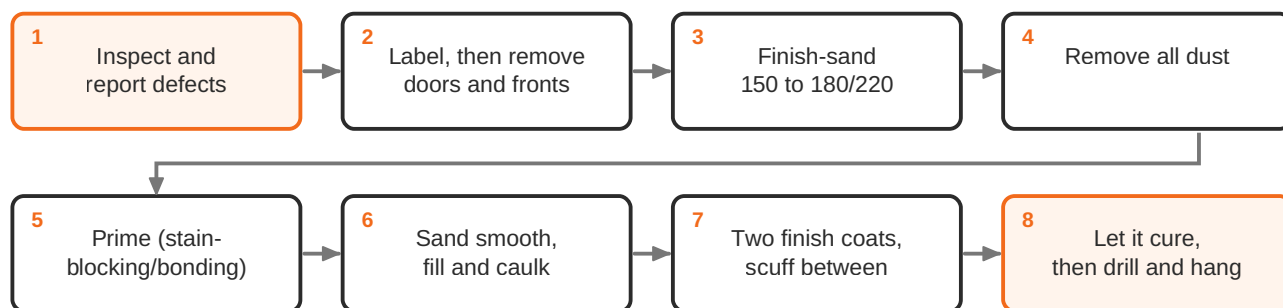


Figure 1. The finishing workflow at a glance.

2 Safety and work area

- Work in a clean, well-ventilated space, within the temperature and humidity range on the product labels. Cold or humid conditions slow drying and curing.
- Wear a dust mask or respirator when sanding. Use a respirator rated for the product when spraying, or when using solvent-based or shellac-based primers.

- Keep solvent and shellac products away from flames and pilot lights. Dispose of oily rags as the label directs; some can self-heat and catch fire.
- Protect floors and nearby surfaces, and keep children and pets away from wet finishes.

3 Inspect, label and take apart

- 1 **Inspect every piece** and report any defect before you start finishing.
- 2 **Let the cabinets acclimate** indoors, away from moisture, before you sand.
- 3 **Photograph and label.** Photograph each cabinet. Write each door's and drawer front's location on painter's tape placed where paint will not go, such as inside a hinge cup bore, or keep a numbered map.
- 4 **Remove doors and hinges.** Remove the screw that holds each hinge arm to its mounting plate to take the door off, then remove the hinges from the doors. Keep each set of hinges and screws in a labeled bag.
- 5 **Remove drawers and fronts.** Take the drawers off their undermount slides (see the Hardware & Hinge Adjustment Guide). Each drawer front is held by two screws from inside the drawer box; remove them and keep them with the front.
- 6 **Remove shelves and shelf pins.** Mask the slides and anything else that should not be painted.

4 Finish-sanding

The cabinets arrive sanded flat to 120 grit. Finish-sanding refines that surface so primer and paint lie smooth.



Figure 2. A typical sequence. Do not skip from 120 straight to a fine grit; each grit removes the scratches of the one before.

- 1 **Sand with 150 grit** over all surfaces you will paint, with the grain. A random-orbit sander works on flat areas; use a sanding sponge or block on profiles and inside corners.
- 2 **Sand with 180 grit** on faces and edges. An optional final pass with 220 grit gives an even smoother base on doors and drawer fronts.
- 3 **Ease sharp edges** very slightly with a sanding sponge. Paint covers a slightly softened edge better than a knife-sharp one.

- 4
- Sand MDF panels lightly. The MDF faces are already smooth. A light pass with 180 to 220 grit is enough; heavy sanding raises fuzz.

⚠ CAUTION: PLYWOOD FACE VENEERS ARE THIN

Sand the Baltic birch boxes and shelves lightly and keep the sander moving. Sanding through the face veneer leaves a spot that is hard to hide under paint.

5

Dust removal

- 1
- Vacuum every surface with a brush attachment, including inside corners, shelf-pin holes and door profiles.
- 2
- Blow out corners and profiles with compressed air, away from your painting area, if you have it.
- 3
- Wipe with a clean microfiber cloth that is barely damp, or with a tack cloth labeled safe for your primer type. Some wax-based tack cloths can interfere with waterborne finishes.
- 4
- Avoid silicone products, such as furniture polish or silicone sprays, anywhere near the work. Silicone causes paint to crater ("fisheye").

6

Primer

Primer seals the wood and MDF, blocks stains, and gives the enamel something to grip. Choose a primer that the maker of your topcoat lists as compatible.

Primer type	Strengths	Things to know
Shellac-based, pigmented	Strong stain and tannin blocking. Seals MDF edges well and causes little grain raise. Dries fast and sands easily.	Strong odor; needs good ventilation and a respirator. Cleanup with denatured alcohol.
Oil-based (alkyd) stain-blocking or bonding primer	Good sealing and stain blocking with little grain raise. Sands well.	Longer dry time and solvent cleanup. VOC rules limit some products in some areas.
Waterborne stain-blocking or bonding primer	Low odor and easy cleanup. Good adhesion.	Can raise the grain on poplar and birch; sand lightly with 220 to 320 grit after the first coat. MDF edges may need extra coats.

- **Poplar** paints well. It can have green, gray or purple streaks and natural extractives that may bleed through some waterborne paints, so a stain-blocking primer is a good choice.
- **Birch plywood** takes paint well but tends to raise its grain under water-based products. A bonding or stain-blocking primer, followed by a light sanding, gives a smooth base.
- Apply one or two thin coats. When dry, sand lightly with 220 to 320 grit until smooth, then remove the dust again.

7 MDF panel edges

The faces of the MDF center panels are smooth, but any machined MDF edge, such as the profile on a raised panel, is more porous. If it is not sealed, it soaks up paint and looks rough.

- 1 Seal the machined edges first.** A shellac-based or oil-based primer works best. Brush on a coat, let it dry and sand lightly with 220 to 320 grit.
- 2 Repeat** until the edge feels smooth. Two coats is common.
- 3 Keep water away.** Do not soak MDF with water-based products or wet cloths; it can swell.

8 Filling and caulking

Do this after priming. Filler and caulk show up better on a primed surface, and caulk sticks better to it.

- **Small holes and gaps:** fill with a paintable wood filler, let it dry, and sand it flush.
- **Face-frame joints:** where a face-frame rail meets a stile, a hairline joint may show through paint. Fill it with a thin bead of paintable acrylic or siliconized acrylic caulk, and wipe it smooth with a damp finger or cloth.
- **Between cabinets and walls:** after installation, caulk the joints between face frames, fillers, cabinets and walls the same way.
- **Do not caulk** the joints on doors and drawer fronts, the gaps around doors and drawers, or anywhere near hinges and slides.
- Let the caulk dry as the label directs before you paint over it.

9 Choosing a cabinet enamel

Use a paint sold for cabinets, doors and trim, not wall paint. Cabinet enamels level out better and dry harder. Common categories:

Enamel type	Characteristics
Waterborne alkyd (hybrid) enamel	Levels and hardens much like an oil paint, with water cleanup and lower odor. Recoat times are longer than for acrylics.
Urethane-modified acrylic enamel	Fast drying, hard and non-yellowing, with good resistance to doors sticking once cured. Popular for cabinets.
100% acrylic cabinet and trim enamel	Easy to use and non-yellowing. Choose one labeled for cabinets.
Oil-based (solvent alkyd) enamel	Very hard finish, but whites and light colors yellow over time. Solvent cleanup, and restricted in some areas.

Satin and semi-gloss are common sheens for cabinets. Higher sheens are easier to clean but show surface flaws more.

10 Spray or brush and roll

Spraying

- Gives the smoothest finish. HVLP sprayers and airless sprayers with fine-finish tips are common.
- Thin the paint only as the label allows. Practice on scrap first.
- Mask the cabinet interiors and the room thoroughly, and ventilate.
- Apply light, even coats, overlapping each pass by about half.

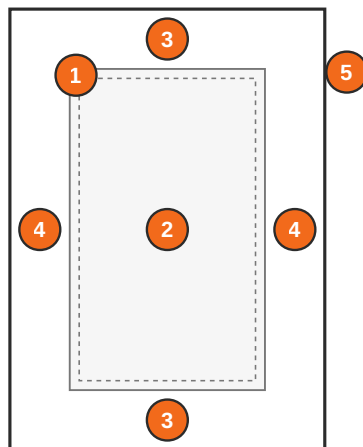
Brush and roll

- Use a quality synthetic brush and a fine foam or short-nap microfiber roller.
- Roll a thin coat on flat areas, then lightly "tip off" with the brush along the grain.
- Brush the profiles and inside corners first, then roll the flat areas.
- Do not overwork paint that has started to set. Let it level on its own.

For either method, two finish coats over primer is typical. Let each coat dry as the label directs, scuff lightly with 220 to 320 grit or a fine sanding sponge, and remove the dust before the next coat.

11 Painting doors and drawer fronts

Paint doors and drawer fronts off the cabinets, lying flat, so paint does not run.



Painting order for a Shaker door (each face)

- 1 Inside corners and panel edges (brush)
- 2 Center panel
- 3 Rails (horizontal pieces), brushing across the full length
- 4 Stiles (vertical pieces), top to bottom, cutting a clean line at the rail joints
- 5 Outside edges last

Paint the back first. Let it dry, then flip the door onto padded points or a rack and paint the front.

Figure 3. A common order for a five-piece Shaker door. Painting rails before stiles leaves clean lines at the joints.

- 1 Set up drying space.** Use painter's pyramids or a drying rack so each piece can dry flat without touching anything.
- 2 Paint the back first.** Include the edges, and the inside edges of the door, so every surface is sealed. Let it dry.
- 3 Flip and paint the front** in the order shown in Figure 3, then the outside edges.
- 4 Keep paint out of the hinge cup bores** where it could affect the hinge fit, or clean them out before the paint sets.

12 Boxes, shelves and drawer boxes

- **Boxes:** prime and paint the face frames, exposed sides and any visible surfaces. For cabinet interiors, we recommend a clear coat or paint.
- **Shelves:** finish both faces and all edges. Let them cure before you set items on them.
- **Drawer boxes:** seal them with a clear finish or paint. Keep the finish thin on the underside and lower edges of the drawer box, where it rests on the undermount slides and locks to them, so the drawer still fits and runs smoothly.
- **Never paint hinges, slides or locking devices.** Remove or mask them.

13 Dry and cure times

"Dry" and "cured" are not the same. Paint can feel dry within hours but take weeks to reach full hardness.

Stage	What it means	Typical guidance
Dry to touch	Dust will no longer stick	Often 30 minutes to a few hours (see label)
Recoat	Ready for the next coat	Varies widely: from a few hours to overnight (see label)
Handle and rehang	Can be handled carefully and rehung	Commonly 1 to 3 days after the last coat, longer in cool or humid weather
Full cure	Reaches full hardness and resistance	Often 2 to 4 weeks; some products up to 30 days

✓ DURING THE CURE PERIOD

Close doors and drawers gently. Add small clear bumpers where doors and drawer fronts touch the face frame to reduce sticking. Do not stack painted parts, put tape on fresh paint, or scrub the surfaces until the paint is fully cured.

14 Drilling for hardware

Doors and drawer fronts ship undrilled so that you can choose your pulls and knobs. Many people drill after the paint has cured. Others drill before priming so that the paint seals the holes. Either way:

- Use a drilling template, or make a jig from scrap, so that every hole lands in the same place.
- Put painter's tape over the hole location, and clamp a scrap backer block behind the hole to prevent splintering on the back.
- Drill straight and level, with a sharp bit of the size the hardware maker recommends.
- **Do not drill the sink base false front.** It is designed with no knob or pull.

The **Hardware & Hinge Adjustment Guide** has placement suggestions and step-by-step drilling instructions.

15 Reassembly and touch-up

- 1 **Reattach the hinges** to the doors using the original screw holes, and rehang each door in its labeled location.
 - 2 **Reattach each drawer front** to its box with its original screws, and put the drawers back on their slides.
 - 3 **Adjust** the hinges and drawer fronts for even gaps (see the Hardware & Hinge Adjustment Guide).
 - 4 **Keep leftover paint.** Label it with the room and the date, and record the brand, color, sheen and primer you used. You will need it for touch-ups (see the Care & Maintenance Guide).
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Questions? Contact RTP Cabinets: RTPCabinets.com/contact

Please include your order number, and photos if your question is about a specific piece.

Disclaimer. This guide gives general information for finishing RTP Cabinets products. Product categories are described in general terms and are not endorsements of any brand. Always follow the instructions, safety data and compatibility guidance from the makers of the primers, paints, caulks and equipment you use. Local regulations on VOCs, disposal and ventilation apply. If you are unsure about any step, consult a qualified painting professional. Specifications are as of October 2026 and may change. See the Brushhollow spec sheet and each product page at RTPCabinets.com for current details.