



Countertop

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Because of bid economics, a fair number of subcontracts for fabrication and installation of casework/countertops in architectural projects end up being divided among different subcontractors, especially fabricators and installers.

The best, and typically the most successful, scenario is when one subcontractor is responsible for both the fabrication and installation of the casework and countertop package. When the responsibility for fabrication and installation, or the less frequent scenario of the fabrication of the casework and countertops, is split, there is an increased need for careful, detailed coordination — especially when the

subcontractors might come from varying market specializations.

There are a multitude of fabrication methodologies for base cabinetry and countertops that are perfectly correct and acceptable within the standards established by the Institute's *Manual of Millwork*; however they may not necessarily be compatible with each other when installed.

For example, in the residential marketplace it's common to see base cabinets built with the door, apron and/or uppermost drawer front dropped down an inch or so from the overall cabinet height (below the top stretcher), allowing for the countertop's front edge overhang.



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Heights

This works fine for face frame (Woodwork Institute Style B) construction; however with frameless (WI Style A) construction it fails to provide the necessary closure member (stretcher) for the top of the door to close against, as required by the *Manual of Millwork*. In typical architectural fabrication, the door, apron and/or uppermost drawer front are only dropped down about 3/16", thereby allowing for everything to close against the stretcher.

The varying methodologies in cabinet construction are traditionally different in their overall height (35-1/2" vs. 34-3/4"), impacting the countertop fabrication and/or installation. For example, a typical HPL


(high pressure laminate) countertop with a 1-1/2" self-edge has a combined substrate and laminate thickness of approximately 3/4", excluding the additional 3/4" in overhang. When this countertop is used with face frame construction it works just fine; however the same top requires a 3/4" filler (spacer) when used with frameless construction.

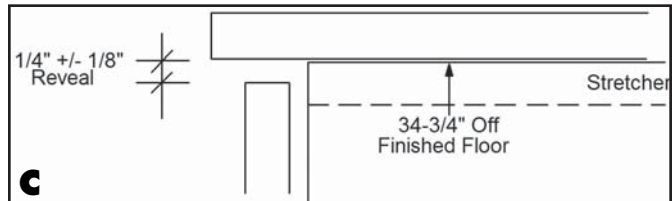
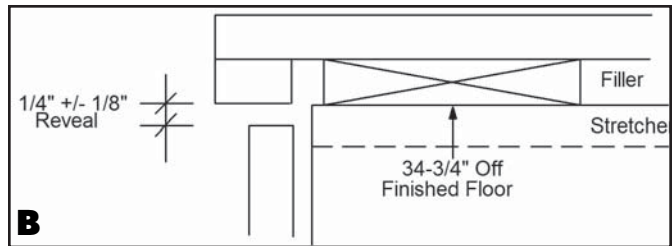
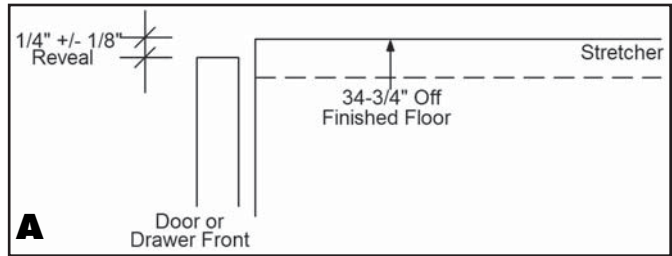
Because of these and related issues, the Woodwork Institute has adopted the following industry standards within Sections 14 and 15 (Part 1 - General) of the *Manual of Millwork* entitled: "INDUSTRY STANDARD LAYOUT and CONSTRUCTION of BASE CABINET STRETCHER." In a

nutshell it establishes an industry standard for the fabricated height of base cabinetry at 34-3/4" off the finished floor along with the finish height after installation of countertops (for varying configurations). And when these standards are not followed, it places the coordination responsibility on the casework fabricator. It also places the responsibility to furnish any necessary filler (spacer) materials directly on the countertop installer.

Because of the varying countertop material thicknesses and front edge design concepts being used in the marketplace, it was determined that the constant figure in the equation should be the base cabinet height, before the countertop is applied. The standard was established at 34-3/4" off the finished floor (see drawing A). Fillers are then used between the base cabinet and countertop to achieve the proper front-edge overhang and overall countertop height (see drawings B and C). The overall countertop height becomes the variable, typically ranging from 35-3/4" to 36-3/4" overall (see listing of typical scenarios).

Obviously, any and all of the above is subject to change by specification to the contrary.

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