

Cabinetmaker

Build kitchens, furniture and millwork out of wood, in a shop, with machines and your hands.

TYPICAL PAY

\$46,680

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$36k to \$64k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

1 to 4 years

after high school

DEMAND

Limited

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

**Cabinet shops, millwork plants,
furniture studios, job sites**

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
Take every woodworking and shop class available. Build things at home and photograph them.
- 2 Get into a shop, or take a program** 0 to 2 years
Either apply straight to a cabinet shop as a helper, or do a 1-year community college woodworking certificate first.
- 3 Learn the machines** First year
Table saw, panel saw, jointer, planer, edge bander, shaper. Safety first, speed much later.
- 4 Apprenticeship or credential** 2 to 4 years
Registered apprenticeships in cabinetmaking combine paid work with classroom hours. The Woodwork Career Alliance credential records skills you can prove.
- 5 Cabinetmaker** Year 3 onward
Reading shop drawings, cutting your own lists, building complete units and fixing what goes wrong.

Pros and cons

- + You go home having made something real
- + Training is cheap or free and you earn while you learn
- + Indoor work, no weather, mostly regular hours
- Pay tops out lower than the licensed building trades
- Dust, noise and machines that will take a finger
- The federal outlook for this occupation is a decline, driven by imported and factory-made cabinets

Optional boosts

CNC (computer numerical control) machining. Cabinet design software. Finishing and spraying. Solid surface and countertop fabrication.

Good to know

Wood moves, and that ruins beginners

Boards swell and shrink across the grain as humidity changes. A drawer that fits perfectly in a damp August can jam in a dry January, which is why good shops control humidity and design joints that allo...

Most cabinets are not solid wood

The boxes are usually plywood or particle board with a veneer or laminate face, and only the doors and face frames are solid. That is not cheating: sheet goods are flatter, more stable and stronger across...

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Cabinetmakers and Bench Carpenters (51-7011.00)
Woodwork Career Alliance: the Passport credential
Architectural Woodwork Institute: standards and quality certification
Apprenticeship.gov: United States Department of Labor

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/cabinetmaker>



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