



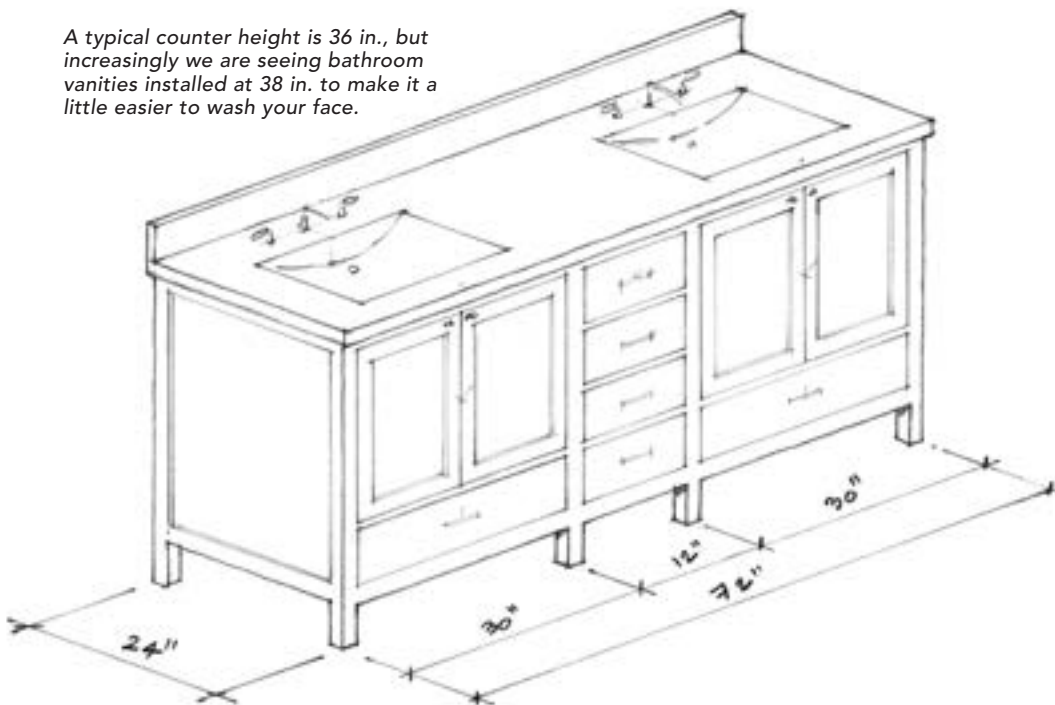
BATHROOM VANITIES

BY MARIANNE CUSATO

A well-detailed bathroom vanity is an efficient and elegant piece of furniture in your bathroom, while a poorly detailed vanity is a frustrating eyesore that contributes to marital strife. The following set of tips can be applied to all styles of cabinetry. The goal of these suggestions is to help you both when building a custom design, as well as selecting a stock product off the shelf.

Marianne Cusato is the author of *Get Your House Right: Architectural Elements to Use and Avoid*. Drawings by the author.

A typical counter height is 36 in., but increasingly we are seeing bathroom vanities installed at 38 in. to make it a little easier to wash your face.



VANITY SIZE AND CONFIGURATION

Double-Sink Vanities

A double-sink vanity is ideally no less than 72 in. wide. They are commercially available starting at 60 in., but before installing the smaller size, it's worth considering the homeowner's pattern of use. Will more than one person be in the bathroom at the same time of day? If not, and if you have limited space, it may be preferable to install a single sink. This leaves more counter space and allows for more drawers for storage. One variation to consider is using a single larger sink with two faucets. This gives the best of both worlds—a little more counter space as well as the ability for two people to use the sink at the same time.

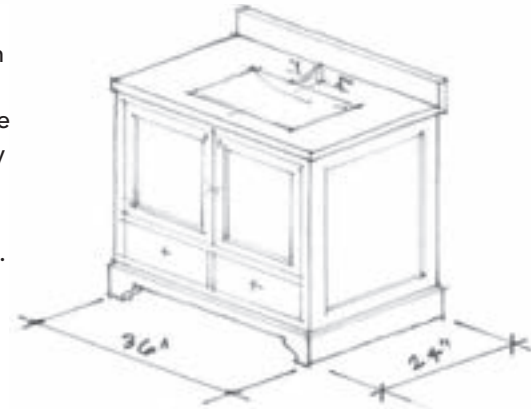
Micro Vanities

In urban apartments and smaller homes where every square inch is at a premium, look for a thinner vanity that projects from the wall 18 in. rather than the full 24 in.



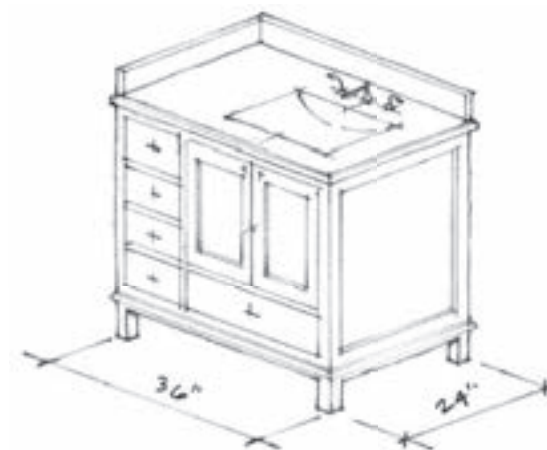
Single-Sink Vanities

A good target dimension for a single vanity is 36 in. This gives enough space for storage and a clear counter. If you are installing in a corner, you can offset the sink to one side to maximize storage. If the vanity is centered in a space, it may look better to center the sink, but this will reduce storage. See below for notes about corner installations.



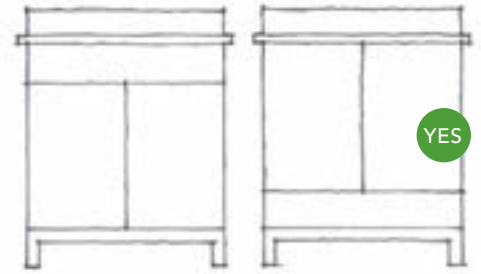
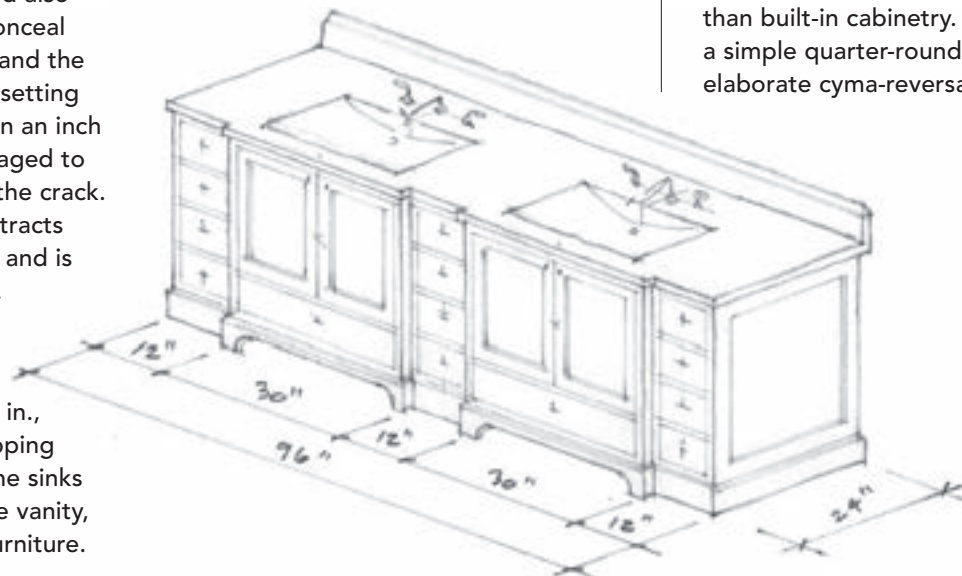
Corner Vanities

Many, if not most, vanities are located in the corner of a room. This introduces a design dilemma, as most stock vanities are built to be freestanding. If you are unable to purchase a vanity designed to fit into a corner, the next option is to set the vanity four or more inches from the corner; this allows the vanity to be freestanding and, most importantly, allows you to clean between the vanity and the wall easily. Another option is to engage the vanity to the wall. In this case, caulk the joint where the counter meets the wall, and also add a thin filler piece to conceal the gap between the wall and the side of the cabinet. Avoid setting the vanity counter less than an inch away from the wall or engaged to the wall without covering the crack. This leaves a space that attracts moisture, dust, and debris and is nearly impossible to clean.



Mega Vanities

For larger vanities over 96 in., give or take, consider stepping the cabinetry forward at the sinks to modulate the size of the vanity, making it look more like furniture.

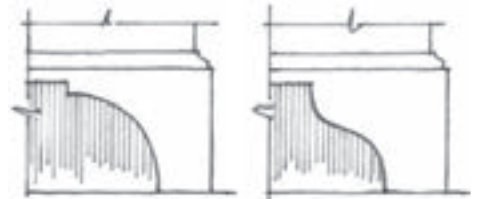


A false drawer front is common, but not the best storage solution.

A real drawer below the doors is more practical.

MAXIMIZING STORAGE

Storage and efficiency are essential in a vanity, yet the default design for most vanities includes a fixed panel in front of the sink where the depth of the bowl blocks the path for a drawer. Rather than forfeiting this space, an alternative option is to run a drawer along the bottom of the vanity, then place the cabinet doors above the drawer. You will still have room for the toilet brush and a small trash can.



Quarter round

Cyma reversa

TOE KICKS AND FEET

Dress the vanity up with feet and legs in front of the toe kick. This makes the vanity feel more like furniture, rather than built-in cabinetry. Profiles include a simple quarter-round cutout or more elaborate cyma-reversa profiles.