

Cabinet Refacing vs Full Renovation

Decision Guide for GTA Homeowners | 2026

Cost comparison at a glance (medium kitchen, GTA 2026)

Option	Typical Cost	Time on Site	Best For
Cabinet refinishing	\$2,500 - \$6,000	2-4 days	Colour refresh only
Cabinet refacing	\$8,000 - \$18,000	3-5 days	New look, same layout
Semi-custom replacement	\$18,000 - \$35,000	1-2 weeks	New boxes, similar layout
Full renovation	\$40,000 - \$90,000+	3-6 weeks	Complete transformation

Choose refacing when...

- ✓ Your cabinet boxes are plywood and structurally sound (no soft spots, no warping)
- ✓ You are happy with the current kitchen layout and do not need to move anything
- ✓ Your interior storage and organization works for how you cook
- ✓ Your budget is under \$20,000 for the kitchen update
- ✓ You need results in under two weeks
- ✓ You are planning to sell within 2 years and need the kitchen to photograph well

Choose full renovation when...

- ✗ There is water damage (soft base under sink, swollen cabinet sides)
- ✗ You want to move a wall, add an island, or change the layout
- ✗ Your interior storage is the main frustration
- ✗ The cabinet boxes are particle board and over 25 years old
- ✗ You are investing in a home where buyers expect a fully renovated kitchen
- ✗ You want to update plumbing, electrical, or flooring at the same time

5 quick tests for your cabinet boxes

1. Press the base of lower cabinets near the plumbing. If it gives, water damage is present.
2. Check cabinet doors: if they consistently droop or do not stay closed, the frame may have racked.
3. Look for visible swelling or delamination at cabinet corners and edges.
4. Check the interior for staining, particularly under the sink and beside the dishwasher.
5. If your cabinets are original to a pre-1990 home, assume particle board and plan accordingly.