



## TO HANDLE OR NOT TO HANDLE?

**There is a growing trend to move away from having handles on your kitchen units. The current trends are towards a sleek seamless design which cupboard handles detract from. Opting for the handleless look will have an effect on your budget, and there are several ways to achieve the desired effect.**

as sharp edges will be prone to wear and tear after repeated impact.

The cut outs required in the carcass to facilitate the channel require precise work in order to look and work correctly. As such, the work should only be undertaken by a kitchen manufacturer with experience in this style. It is common practice for the channel only to be cut and fitted once the carcasses have been fitted on site. This helps to ensure a good continuity of the channel from one bank of units to another.

When deciding on handleless design, you need to consider both the door and the hardware supporting it. There are three ways a door can be designed to be handleless:

### THE BROKEN EDGE DOOR

This door can have almost any finish and is probably the truest form of handleless design. It can be made from melamine or laminate, wrap or duco. Here, a channel (often stainless steel or aluminium) is inserted in the top line of the cabinet or drawer. This creates a space between the top of the drawer or door where your fingers can easily fit to grasp and open it. For wall cabinets the channel is inserted in the cabinets bottom shelf. While with tall cabinets the channel is usually vertically inserted to the side of the unit allowing space for fingers between the two neighbouring units. If done correctly, the channel usually leaves a shadow line that adds a dramatic effect to the cabinetry.

The benefits to this design are that there is minimal handling of the door or drawer itself, so finger marking is kept to a minimum. The design is also hard wearing as most impact is absorbed by the channel. It is advisable that the door manufacturer should profile the radius edges of both the front and back of the doors and drawers

### THE FINGER GRIP DOOR

Here, a painted rail is inserted onto the door or drawer. The door or drawer itself is actually routed and shaped to accommodate the rail. This option can be done with duco and veneer finishes. The advantage here, is that the rail can be customised in colour, either to match or contrast to the door/drawer finish. This is often viewed as the most aesthetically pleasing handleless design, but it does take time to manufacture and install and requires a highly skilled fitter and manufacturer.

### THE J GROOVE DOOR

This is generally the most cost-effective option and doors and drawers are ordered and fitted as per normal. Here the finger grip is part of the door profile, routed out of the front of the door/drawer itself. It is important to note that the impact zone on this profile is small and as such doors made from 16mm panels should be treated with caution as they will damage easily. It is also important to note that use of this profile is not easy for everyone and does not fare well with painted finishes. People with large hands or long nails may struggle to get a firm grip on the door to open it. Long nails can,



over time, scratch and damage the finish in the finger grip area. It is also possible for water and dirt to collect in the finger grip area compromising the integrity of the finish. It is vital that doors/drawers of this nature are manufactured by a reputable manufacturer to ensure their longevity. When made cheaply, you will quickly see chipping and cracking in the finish around the finger grip area.



Kitchen hardware has also been developed to facilitate a handleless kitchen. Push to open systems are available from most reputable hardware brands. It is important to note that these vary in price and quality, so getting the hardware from a reputable company is essential. This system works with ordinary kitchen doors and drawers and can, in some cases, be added easily to existing fronts. With this system, pressure is applied to a particular area of the door or drawer facilitating the release and opening of it. It must be noted that this system requires a lot of handling of the door and as such, will increase finger marking and the need for cleaning. It is important that the fitter is well trained on fitting this hardware, because if fitted incorrectly,

it will cause frustration and not work properly. Once you have selected the brand of touch to open mechanism you will be using, ensure your fitter is equipped with the required knowledge to install the chosen hardware. Reputable brands will offer the necessary training and often have apps that can be downloaded for additional assistance on site.

Soft-close is another mechanism often sold in tandem with a handleless design. This too can sometimes be added to existing hardware and facilitates the almost silent and soft closing of the doors and drawers when pushed closed. This in turn, lessens the impact and potential wear and tear on the door or drawer.



Electronic systems are fairly new on the South African market. These systems, being latest technology, are fairly costly. These systems can be motion activated and electronic sensors pick up your hand indication in front of the unit as to what must be opened or closed; or they can work through a light touch to the unit you are wishing to open. Systems like these are particularly useful in lift mechanisms for high level units and for areas like the dustbin or grocery cupboard, where your hands may be full and the use of an elbow or hip can be made to open the unit.

So, while handleless is definitely the look to go with at the moment, you should stop and take a second to consider the cost consequences and whether your kitchen manufacturer has the expertise to make and install the items correctly.

**With thanks to the following KSA members for their assistance with this article:**



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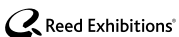
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