

Hidden cat litter cabinet from an IKEA BESTÅ: step by step

Round entry holes in the side panels, a clean edge, and sealing so pee never reaches the cardboard core. Written after building it, October 2026.

A BESTÅ side panel is not solid wood. It is two thin skins with a paper honeycomb in between and a solid band along the edges. So the hole goes in the middle of the panel, you cut it with a laminate blade, and the hollow edge gets closed with silicone and a U-shaped edge trim.

It takes three days, almost all of it waiting. The cutting is the short part: from the first circle drawn to the second hole finished, it took me an hour and a quarter for both side panels. The rest is silicone curing.

A · measure and mark

B · cut

C · edge trim

D · assembly and sealing

E · the cats

The finished cabinet



Closed: a plain BESTÅ, 120 cm wide, two doors.



Open: one litter box per compartment, one hole per side panel.



The left side panel with the U trim.

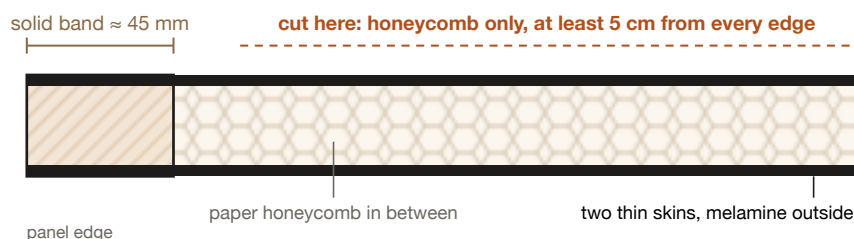


The day it was assembled.

What I learned doing it

- The circle-cutting guide and a T 101 BIF blade left the outer face clean, no chipping (step B8).
- Drilling the starter hole flush with the line left a small bite in the edge on both panels. Drill it a couple of millimetres further in (step B3).
- Cut the U trim about 5 mm **short**, not long: the rubber expands in the heat (step C2).
- Silicone in the hollow edge of the hole, in every inside joint and in the pre-drilled shelf holes, so pee never reaches the cardboard (steps C4 and D2).
- No clamps or chairs needed: two plastic storage boxes held the panel. The compass for drawing the circle was a strip of cardboard and a screw.

First, the panel



Cross-section of a side panel, not to scale. The panel is about 18 mm thick.

Thickness. Side panels are about 18 mm, bottom, top and divider 36-38 mm. These figures come from forums, because IKEA does not publish them. The U trim has to match the panel, so measure before you buy it.

Inside. Two skins a few millimetres thick, the paper honeycomb, and a solid band about 45 mm wide along every edge. People who cut across that band describe an uneven edge, half hard and half cardboard, and called it "a nightmare". Stay at least 5 cm (2 in) away from every edge and you only cut cardboard, so the edge looks the same all the way round.

What you need

What I bought

- ☐ Bosch PST 650 jigsaw
 - ☐ Bosch Special for Laminate blades (2 × T 101 BIF, 1 × T 101 AOF)
 - ☐ Bosch parallel guide with circle cutter, 2 608 040 289
 - ☐ White U-shaped edge trim, 18 mm, rubber (TPE), self-adhesive
 - ☐ Pure acetic silicone, without anti-mould additives
- About 100 € in total, BESTÅ excluded.

Also needed

- ☐ Drill, 10 mm wood bit and a 2-3 mm bit
- ☐ Wide masking tape
- ☐ Pencil, tape measure, square
- ☐ A strip of stiff cardboard and a screw or nail
- ☐ Utility knife and flat screwdriver
- ☐ 2 clamps, 2 identical chairs or 2 plastic boxes
- ☐ Safety glasses and a dust mask
- ☐ Vacuum cleaner
- ☐ Fine sandpaper, 180 grit
- ☐ Caulking gun
- ☐ Nitrile gloves
- ☐ Water with a couple of drops of dish soap

A Measure and mark

A1

Measure the side panel thickness

Tape measure or calliper on the edge. If it is not 18 mm, change the trim now, while it is still sealed in its packaging.

A2

Test-fit the litter box

Usable depth inside the cabinet is about 36-38 cm, width about 56 cm per compartment. A 40 cm deep box will not fit without opening up the back panel (Random Tasks on YouTube had to). Also check that the doors close with the box inside.

A3

Label the pieces

The outer face is the smooth one. The inner face has the holes for hinges, shelves and cam locks. On each panel you are going to cut, put a piece of tape saying **OUTSIDE** with an arrow pointing to the **BOTTOM**. Check which end is the bottom in the IKEA instructions, or by dry-fitting the bottom panel on the dowels, without screwing.

I used one piece of tape per panel, on the top edge of the outer face: **TOP LEFT** and **TOP RIGHT**. Face, direction and which panel, in two words.

A mistake others made. DecoHomeDiary cut the wrong panel and, turning it round to fix it, ended up with the entrance higher than planned. That is what the tape is for.

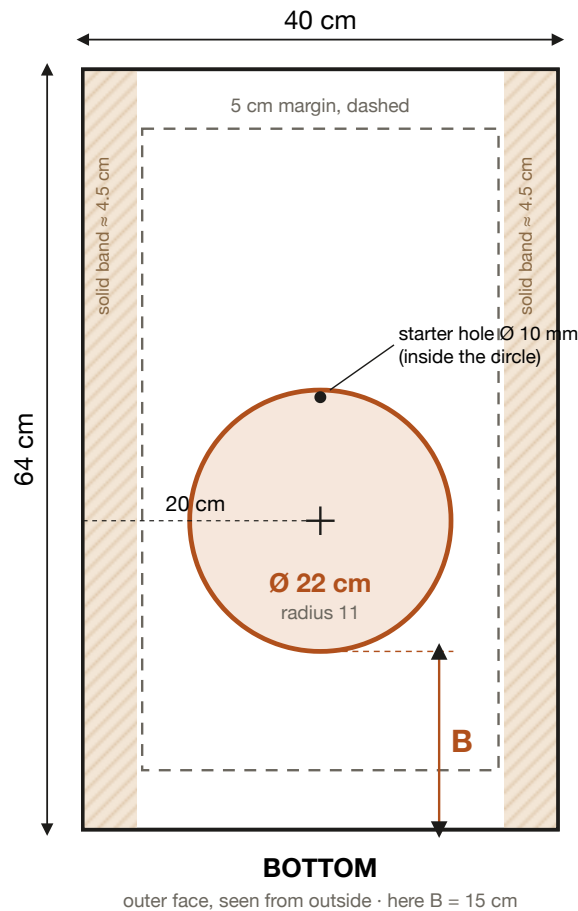
A4

Decide the height of the hole

The centre of the hole is not the centre of the panel. Placed on the diagonals, the bottom of the hole would sit 21 cm off the floor, too high. What decides it is the rim of the litter box:

B = bottom panel thickness (≈ 3.7 cm) + height of the box rim where the cat steps in + 1 cm
hole centre = B + 11 cm from the lower edge of the side panel, 20 cm from the front edge

For example, with a 3.7 cm bottom and a 10 cm rim, B is about 15 and the centre goes at 26 cm. Never go below 10 cm, because that is where the side panel joins the bottom.



A 40 × 64 cm side panel seen from outside. The hole sits halfway along the depth, so front and back do not matter: only the bottom does. If your BESTÅ has a different height, only the numbers change.

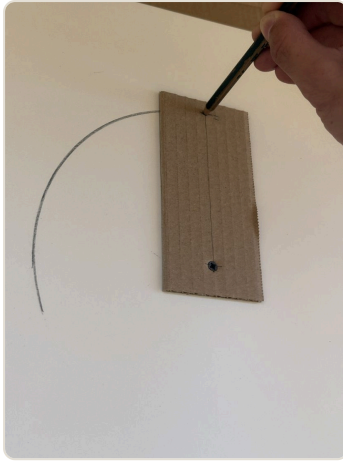
Other builds used 17 × 17 cm, 21 × 21 cm between 14 and 35 cm from the bottom, or a 20 cm circle. For an average-sized cat, 22 cm (8.7 in) works.

A5

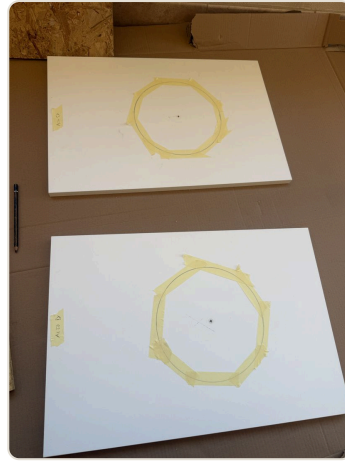
Draw the circle

Mark the centre and drill the small hole from step B2 straight away: the compass pivot goes in it, and later the point of the cutting guide. The compass is a strip of cardboard with a screw through the small hole and a pencil hole 11 cm away.

Draw the circle directly on the panel, then cover it with eight strips of masking tape across the line, in an octagon: you can see the pencil through the tape. The guide does the real cut, but the line tells you where to put the starter hole and whether everything adds up.



The cardboard compass, with the screw in the centre hole.



Both panels ready: pencil circle, tape octagon on top.

B Cutting

B1

The work surface

The circle has to be over empty space, and the rest of the panel held still. Three ways to do it:

- **Table and 2 clamps.** The whole hole area sticks out past the table edge, and the clamps hold the part that rests on the table.
- **Two identical chairs.** The panel bridges them, chairs under the ends, circle in the middle. Someone leans on it, or put weights well away from the circle.
- **Two identical plastic storage boxes,** panel resting on their rims: like the chairs, but lower. That is what I used, with cardboard on the floor for the dust.

The **OUTSIDE** face goes up. Laminate blades cut on the down stroke, so the top face stays clean. Leave at least 6 cm free under the circle, because the blade sticks out about 4.



The panel bridging two boxes, starter hole already drilled.

A vibrating panel chips. If the supports wobble, hold it down with weights away from the circle, or with clamps.

B2

A small hole in the centre

2-3 mm bit, or tap in a nail. It keeps the guide's point from slipping. In a 10 mm hole the point would wobble.

B3

The starter hole

10 mm bit, inside the circle, with its edge **2-3 mm before the line**. The whole hole sits in the piece you will throw away. When the bit goes through the outer skin it suddenly sinks into the cardboard: hold the drill steady.

I drilled mine with the edge flush with the line. On both panels it left a small bite in the edge of the hole at that point. The trim covers it, but with 2-3 mm of margin it does not happen at all.



The bite left by a starter hole drilled flush with the line.

B4

A test cut

With the jigsaw unplugged, fit a T 101 BIF. Then, from the starter hole, cut freehand 3-4 cm straight towards the centre, still in the waste piece, and stop well before the small centre hole. Look at the top face: if the edge is clean, carry on; if it chips, feed more slowly.

B5

Fit the circle-cutting guide

Still unplugged.

- The graduated bar slides into the slots in the jigsaw base and locks with its screw.
- Under the black T block, in a recess, there is the centring point. Take it out and push it into the hole in the block.
- Set the radius to **11 cm**, measured from the point to the outer side of the teeth.
- Push the point into the small centre hole. The jigsaw will turn around it.

The Bosch guide is rated for panels 5 to 30 mm thick: the side panel is fine, the 36-38 mm divider is not.



The guide fitted, halfway through the first cut.

B6

A dry run

Blade in the starter hole and jigsaw off, go all the way round by hand. Check that clamps, table edge, chairs and cable are not in the way. Then put the cable over your shoulder so it does not get tangled.

B7

The cut

Glasses and mask on. If you have a helper, have them hold the vacuum hose close to the blade: no dust, and the line stays visible (a tip from a Swedish blog).

Squeeze the trigger almost all the way and move forward slowly. A clean edge comes from slow feeding, not from a slow blade. Do not push: the guide carries the saw.

Stop three quarters of the way round and wait for the blade to stop. Put two pieces of tape across the cut you have already made, bridging disc and panel, then finish. The disc hangs on the tape instead of dropping and tearing the edge.

At the end, wait for the blade to stop before lifting the saw.



The disc comes away with the saw, because the guide point stays stuck in the centre.

B8

Clean up the edge

Peel off the tape slowly, towards the hole, close to the panel. The edge looks like the photo: two skins with cardboard in between. That is normal. Run the 180 sandpaper lightly over the edge of the laminate, just to remove the fuzz. Vacuum the crumbs and pull off any loose bits of cardboard with your fingers.



The fresh edge: clean outer face, honeycomb in the thickness.

B9

The second panel

Do not touch the guide's radius. Check the OUTSIDE tape and the BOTTOM arrow again (or your TOP LEFT and TOP RIGHT): the second panel is a mirror image, and the easiest mistake is a hole at the right height but at the wrong end.



Both panels done, mirror images of each other.

C The U edge trim

C1

Measure the real circumference

Run a strip of paper round the edge of the hole and measure that, not the maths. For a 22 cm diameter the circumference is about 69 cm ($\pi \times 22 = 69.1$), but your hole may be off by a few millimetres.

C2

Cut the trim about 5 mm short, not long

The trim is rubber (TPE) and it gets longer in the heat. Over 69 cm, with 20 degrees between winter and summer, that is about 2-3 mm. Cut it long and in summer it has nowhere to go, so it bulges. Cut it short and it has room.

I cut mine about 5 mm short, partly by a measuring slip and partly on purpose to leave that margin. In the photos of the finished cabinet the edge runs clean all the way round.

Do not cut it long "to be safe". That rule of thumb works for metal, not for rubber, which expands about ten times more.

C3

Dry fit

Fit the trim with the adhesive backing still on, to see how it sits. The joint goes at the top, at 12 o'clock: paws and litter pass through the bottom.

C4

Silicone, then trim

- With the screwdriver, push the cardboard back 5 mm between the two skins, all the way round.
- Fill that groove with silicone, flush.
- Straight away, peel off the backing and fit the trim starting from the joint at the top, pressing it in as you go round.
- Wipe off any smears immediately with a finger dipped in soapy water. Once dry they only come off with a knife.

The adhesive grips the two skins, and the silicone seals the cardboard and stiffens the edge.

C5

Wait 24 hours before assembling

Leave the panels flat while the silicone in the edge cures.

D Assembly and sealing

D1

Assemble the BESTÅ

Follow the IKEA instructions, with the side panels oriented as the tape says. Then **anchor it to the wall** with the included fitting. IKEA requires it because of the tip-over risk, and a cat jumping on top is one more reason.

D2

Silicone in the inside joints

Where:

- between the bottom and the side panels;
- between the bottom and the back panel;
- in the lowest 10 cm of the vertical corners;
- in the pre-drilled shelf holes and any other unused hole inside. Under the laminate there is cardboard, and pee would soak in from there.

I sealed every inside joint, not just the low ones, and every shelf hole.

How:

- masking tape on both sides of the joint, 2-3 mm away;
- a thin bead of silicone;
- smooth it **immediately** with a gloved finger dipped in soapy water;
- remove the tape straight away, while the silicone is still wet.

Silicone skins over in about ten minutes, and after that you cannot tidy it any more. Smooth it wet, not dry.

D3

Let it air out

Doors open for 48 hours, 72 is better, until you can no longer smell vinegar. Only then put in the litter boxes and the cats.

E The cats

- Put a mat in front of the hole, and another inside, under the litter box.
- A draught-excluder strip along the bottom, behind the door, keeps litter in when you open it. Run it along the whole door and it keeps the smell in too: people who did it notice the difference between door open and closed.
- Close the cable hole in the back panel: litter escapes through it.
- For the first few days keep the old litter box next to the cabinet, and put some used litter in the new one.
- If your cat will not go in the dark, add a small motion-sensor light.
- Closed does not mean odour-free: it needs cleaning more often than before.
- If pee goes over the rim, get a high-sided litter box or put a plastic tray with 5-10 cm sides underneath. Those two things together often solve it on their own.

If your cat pees outside the box, not just over the rim, the cause is usually behavioural or a urinary problem: ask a vet. A closed cabinet can make it worse.

Photos: all mine, taken while building it in October 2026.

Ideas and tips came from people who built one before me. Thanks to:

- r/ikeahacks, especially [Nemo1ner's BESTÅ litter box \(2021\)](#);
- IKEA Hackers, for example [BESTÅ litter box cabinet](#) and [hidden litter tray](#);
- [Kreativ längtan](#), [Youdid](#), [DecoHomeDiary](#), [Real Creative Real Organized](#), [Classe Créative](#);
- [DIY StackExchange](#), for how the panel is built inside.

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