

# Storage Cabinets

These are the 10 most commonly asked questions about storage cabinets for commercial office environments, with straightforward answers to help you make a confident, well-informed purchase decision.

## Top 10 Questions — Storage Cabinets

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### **What is the difference between a tall storage cabinet and a low storage cabinet?**

Tall storage cabinets (also called wardrobe cabinets) are 65–72 inches high with full-height double doors and multiple adjustable shelves — some models include a garment rod for coat storage. They maximize vertical storage in utility areas like breakrooms, mailrooms, and supply rooms, but their height creates visual weight in a room and requires wall anchoring for safety in most installations. Low storage cabinets are 36–42 inches high (counter height), with two doors and one to two adjustable shelves; their top surface doubles as a usable work surface for printers, copiers, or secondary work areas. For private offices and under-window installations, low cabinets preserve sight lines and make the room feel more open. Most commercial offices use a combination: tall units in utility areas where vertical storage capacity is the priority, and low units in occupied work areas where the top surface is needed and visual openness matters.

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### **What locking options are available for storage cabinets?**

Storage cabinet locking systems range from basic cam locks to high-security electronic access. Cam locks are the most common — a single rotating cylinder engages a cam behind the door or drawer, providing general-purpose security for office supplies and personal items. Bar locks (also called interlocks) use a vertical steel bar to engage multiple drawers simultaneously from a single lock point, securing an entire tall cabinet with one key. Pin-tumbler cylinders offer higher pick resistance and are specified for regulated materials, confidential records, HR files, and high-value items. Master key systems allow one master key to open all cabinets in a department or floor while individual keys remain assigned to specific units — essential for facilities management in large installations. Electronic keypad or RFID card-access locks are appropriate for shared environments where authorized users change frequently, as access lists can be updated without physical re-keying.

**3****What shelf weight capacity should I look for in a commercial storage cabinet?**

Commercial-grade laminate shelves with steel reinforcement are rated at 75–150 lbs per shelf under evenly distributed load — the standard for most office storage applications. Residential-grade particleboard shelves without steel reinforcement typically sag under sustained loads over 50 lbs and are not appropriate for commercial environments. To assess whether a shelf rating is adequate, estimate the heaviest load it will carry: a full ream of copy paper weighs approximately 5 lbs, so 10 reams on one shelf equals 50 lbs; a shelf full of binders can reach 40–80 lbs depending on binder size and spacing. Specify adjustable-shelf pin systems rated for the expected maximum load before ordering — adjustable shelves that are not properly rated will bow or fail under sustained heavy loads. Steel shelves are the highest-capacity option and are appropriate for mailrooms and supply areas where paper and heavy materials are stored.

**4****What door style should I choose for my storage cabinet?**

Door style affects daily usability, aesthetics, and the clearance required in front of the cabinet. Hinged swing doors are the most common — they swing outward on concealed or piano hinges and provide full-width access to the interior, but require clear space in front equal to the full door width. Sliding doors move horizontally on a track and require no front clearance, making them ideal for tight spaces and busy aisles — the trade-off is that only half the cabinet interior is accessible at a time. Tambour (roll-up) doors consist of horizontal slats that roll into housing above the opening, providing full-face access with zero swing clearance — the best choice for credenzas and admin areas in high-traffic spaces. Glass doors in aluminum or wood frames are used in display cabinets, reception areas, and executive offices where the contents are meant to be visible. For high-traffic administrative areas, tambour doors provide the best combination of full-width access and zero clearance requirement.

**5****Do tall storage cabinets need to be anchored to the wall?**

Yes — any freestanding cabinet over 48 inches tall should be anchored to the wall using anti-tip hardware, and in California and other Zone 4 seismic areas, wall anchoring is required by building code for commercial occupancies. Fully loaded tall cabinets can exceed 300–400 lbs — a tipping event caused by a partially opened drawer, an earthquake, or an accidental bump creates a serious life-safety risk. The strongest anchoring method is a through-bolt or lag bolt through the cabinet back panel directly into a wall stud or concrete anchor — drywall anchors alone are not adequate for the forces generated by a tall, fully loaded cabinet. Anti-tip straps (heavy-duty nylon with two mounting points) are the simplest method; steel L-brackets bolted to the top rear of the cabinet and into a stud provide more rigid attachment. Always verify that anchoring hardware is included with the cabinet or order it separately at the time of purchase.

**6****What is the best surface material for commercial storage cabinets?**

Thermally fused melamine (TFM) with 3mm PVC edge banding is the commercial standard for storage cabinet surfaces — the heat-bonded surface layer is scratch and stain resistant, holds up under daily use, and is available in dozens of woodgrain and solid-color finishes. High-pressure laminate (HPL) is the premium upgrade, offering slightly greater impact resistance than TFM and an even wider finish range. Painted steel cabinets are appropriate for mailrooms, healthcare, and government environments where the cleanability of an all-steel unit justifies the additional weight and narrower color range. Wood veneer is reserved for executive offices and premium reception areas where aesthetics justify the additional maintenance requirements — veneer is susceptible to moisture and scratches, and requires more careful handling than laminate. For any high-use commercial environment, TFM or HPL provides the best combination of durability, appearance, and cost.

**7****What is a storage credenza and how is it different from a regular storage cabinet?**

A storage credenza is a wide, low storage unit — typically 60–72 inches wide, 20–24 inches deep, and 29–36 inches tall — that sits behind a desk or along a wall and combines doors, drawers, and sometimes open shelves in a single piece. Unlike a tall wardrobe cabinet that maximizes vertical storage in a utility area, a credenza is a finished piece of office furniture designed to coordinate with desks and executive suites. The top surface of a credenza is typically at a useful working height (29–30 inches), making it functional as a secondary work surface, printer stand, or display area. Credenzas are standard in private offices and executive environments, providing significant accessible storage across the full width while presenting a polished appearance. They are also used as reception counters and as behind-counter storage in front-desk areas.

**8****What caster type should I specify for a mobile storage cabinet?**

Mobile storage cabinets (pedestals, rolling cabinets, and mobile credenzas) run on four casters, typically two of which lock. Caster type must match the floor surface: hard casters (nylon or hard plastic) for carpeted floors, where the harder surface rolls more easily through carpet fibers; soft casters (rubber or polyurethane) for hard floors — wood, tile, polished concrete, and luxury vinyl — to prevent scratching and reduce rolling noise. Standard pedestal casters are 2–3 inches in diameter; larger rolling cabinets use 3–4 inch casters for easier movement. At minimum, two of four casters should lock to prevent the cabinet from rolling when drawers are opened or loaded — an unlocked rolling cabinet under load is a tip and injury risk. Confirm that locking casters are included as standard before ordering, as some economy models ship with non-locking casters on all four corners.

**9****How do I choose the right storage cabinet for a breakroom or supply area?**

Breakroom and supply area storage requires cabinets that balance capacity, easy maintenance, and durability under daily access by many users. Tall storage cabinets (65–72 inches) with adjustable shelves are the primary choice for supply rooms — they hold the widest variety of items (reams of paper, binders, office supplies, cleaning products) on configurable shelves. For personal item storage in open-plan or hot-desking environments, individual locker towers (12–15 inches wide, with key or combination locks) assigned to each employee provide secure personal storage at each person's designated unit. For breakrooms, combine a tall supply cabinet for communal supplies with a low cabinet under the counter for appliances and small items. Easy-clean laminate surfaces and cabinet interiors — TFM or HPL — are essential in food-adjacent areas where spills and moisture are common.

**10****What ADA accessibility requirements apply to storage cabinets?**

For storage cabinets in ADA-accessible environments, the primary requirements govern reach range and hardware. All commonly accessed items must be placed within the ADA reach range of 15–48 inches above the finished floor — top shelves above 48 inches are restricted to infrequently accessed items. A clear floor space of 30 inches wide by 48 inches deep is required in front of any accessible storage location, allowing a wheelchair user to approach without obstruction. Hardware requiring tight grasping, pinching, or twisting (such as small round knobs) is not ADA-compliant — specify lever-style handles, D-ring pulls, or push-to-open mechanisms. For fully accessible environments, keypad or card-access electronic locks are preferred over standard cam locks, which can be difficult for users with limited hand dexterity.

Have more questions? Our office furniture specialists are ready to help.

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