

## Coachmen 17FQ drawer addition

The following instructions will guide you through the steps needed to remove a blank panel above the heater and install a drawer. While this is a fairly easy modification I make no guarantees on the outcome of this project.

The photo below shows the blank panel where we'll be working. Note that it is just above the propane furnace. I checked the furnace instructions and the drawer will have the required clearance away from the top of the furnace. Still, I do **not** recommend you leave anything in the drawer that's highly flammable (matches, lighters, pressurized cans, etc.) or could things that melt (lip balm, candles, etc). When the furnace is running the drawer does get warm due to the heat rising off the furnace.



### Getting Started:

While you could do all the work through the front opening you'd need some long skinny arms. Better to remove the panel between our work space and the cabinet to its left. Open the doors on the under sink cabinet and take a look at the panel on the far right.



You'll see that this panel is held in place by some cleats along the back and bottom as well as being stapled along the front edge. The cleat screws are your standard #2 square drive type wood screws found throughout the camper. Remove the cleat screws and carefully pry loose the front edge. A cat's claw pry bar works well for this kind of work.



Optional: If your camper was like mine the panel was oversized to partly wedge it in place. In the photo above you can see how it bows outward at the top. If you're picky like me you can improve the fit. While I had the panel out I trimmed it down on a table saw to better fit the opening. You could do the same with a circular saw fitted with a fine tooth blade. Note you'll have to install a cleat block into the underside of the counter top and/or cabinet rear to give the panel something to rest against.

#### Removing the Blank Panel:

OK, now you have better access to where the drawer will go. We now need to remove the blank panel currently covering the opening where the drawer will go. Its pneumatically nailed into the cabinet face from the rear. The easiest way to remove the panel is to use a hammer and a scrap of 2x4. Place the 2x4 against the panel and whack it (not too hard) with the hammer. Doing it this way lessens the chance you'll accidentally hit the cabinet face. When you're done what was a blank panel is now your drawer opening.



### Fitting the Drawer Slides:

I used a pair of 22" Liberty Soft Close Ball Bearing Full Extension Drawer Slides purchased from Home Depot for just under \$19. The soft close feature works well and helps hold the drawer closed while underway. Also pick up a Liberty Slide Face Frame Kit - \$3, also at HD.



As the depth of the opening is greater than the 22" slides can reach you'll need to glue and screw a 1" thick board to the back of the cabinet. The rear socket ends of the face frame kit attached to this board and the front guides will be centered vertically on the cabinet opening.



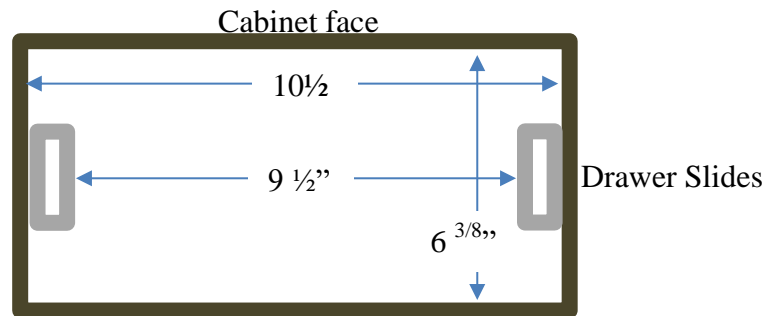
I found it easiest to measure for center on the front face frame, mount the front guides, then used a level on the slides to get the rear sockets positioned correctly. Of course this technique needs the trailer to be level as well.

Opps: In the photo above on the left rear you can see a vertical piece of wood I had installed to better stop the cabinet side panel that was removed earlier. I wasn't thinking through the project and only later realized it got in the way of the 1" thick board the rear slide sockets attach. So... if you do add a side panel stop don't place it where I did.

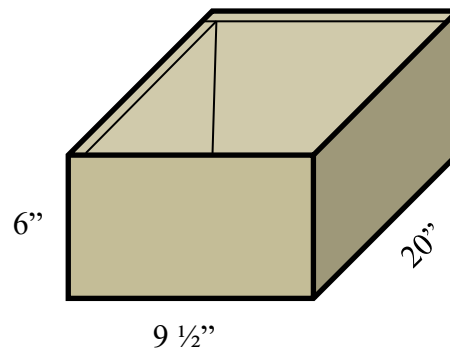
### Building the Drawer:

I waited until I had the slide hardware mounted up before I got started on the drawer. That way I knew what the drawer dimensions needed to be. I suspect the cabinets in these campers are built on a jig and will all be the same but it's best to check each one.

Here's what I had:



Using those dimensions of the opening I built the drawer to these dimensions:



I used  $\frac{1}{2}$ " cabinet plywood for the drawer sides and  $\frac{1}{4}$ " ply for the bottom. Once the drawer is built you mount the slides on the sides of the drawer. The drawer doesn't have to be exactly vertically centered in the opening as the front panel will cover any gaps between the drawer side and the opening.

### Building the Drawer Face:

I used a 1" thick piece of red oak 11 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" x 7 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" for my drawer face. I did attempt to stain it with a dark red stain to better match the original cabinet finish. It's attached with short wood screws from inside the drawer into the face. I installed a basic brushed stainless drawer pull I felt matched the rest of the cabinet hardware.



### A Modification:

After using the drawer a few times I realized that it's rather deep at 6". Small items can get lost at the bottom of the drawer. So I added <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" plywood along the inside sides to support a small sliding tray. To get to what's under the tray you can slide it forward or back or lift it out completely.

