

## From Billys To Built-Ins

Hey all, hope you had a fun Halloween yesterday! My mister and I spent the weekend tackling a storage solution we've been meaning to get to for some time. Up in our little guest studio above the garage (affectionately nicknamed the 'Garage Mahal') we finally built ourselves a wall of bookcases to store books and other collectibles.

Years ago, we set up a makeshift media center in the space with some small wood bookcases and a coffee table to hold our dinosaur TV. We finally decided to donate that TV and change the wall to serve a different purpose. I've been thinking about IKEA's Billy bookcases for years, but I was always disappointed with their 11" depth. In October, IKEA release a 15" deep Billy bookcase which finally sold me on the wall to wall bookcase project I've been thinking about for years. At last, it's finally finished!

So long old media center . . .



. . . hellooooo built in bookcases!



I am in love! I've wanted a wall of built in bookcases for years, people, years! We finally made it happen for under \$400 and in about 7 hours.

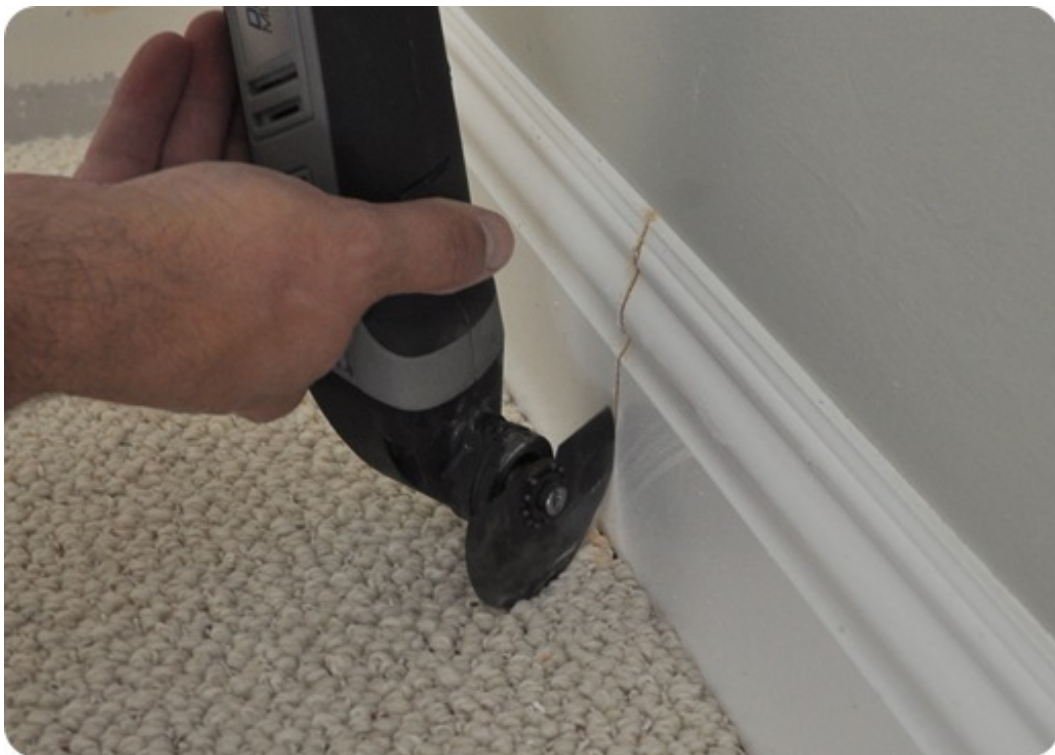
We started with four of these [15 inch deep Billy bookcases](#) from IKEA:



We knew we wanted to reuse the existing baseboard along the front of the bookcase wall, so I carefully cut the existing caulking with a Dremel MultiMax and pried it off.



Next, we measured and then mitered the baseboard where the old baseboard piece would fit when set in front of the new cabinets.



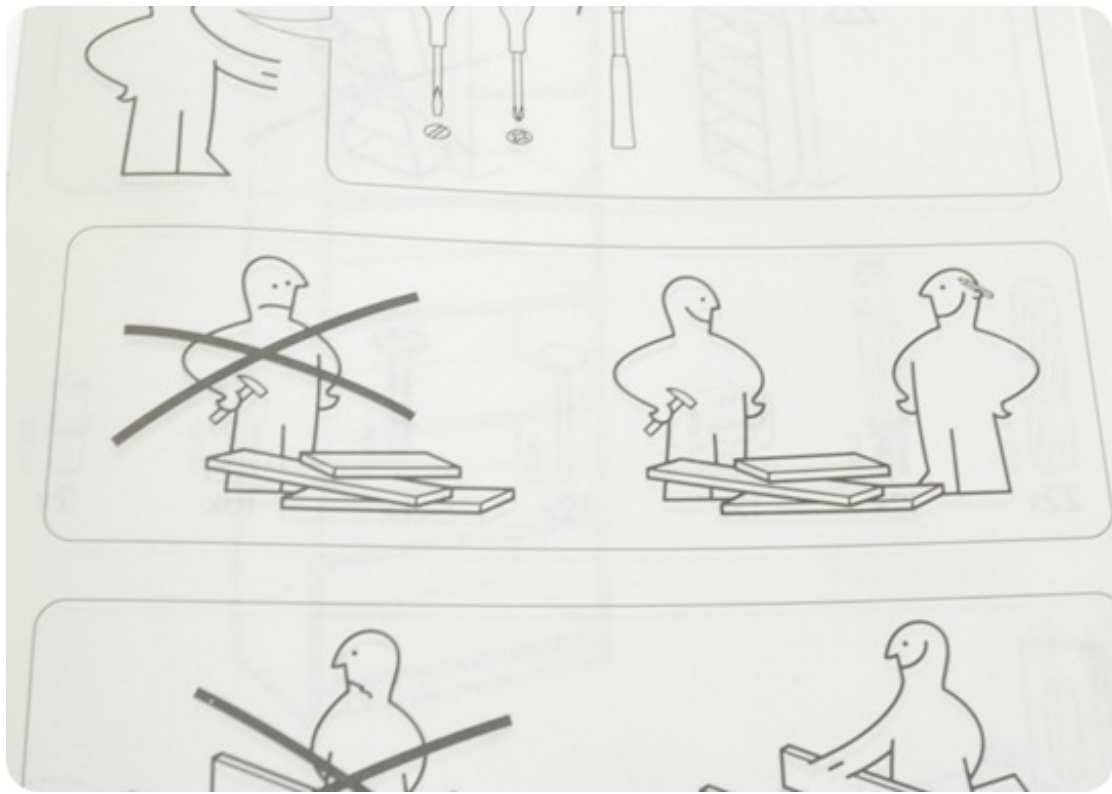
The only problem in using the existing baseboard was it was taller than the height of the bottom Billy shelf. In order for the existing baseboard to sit at the same height, we had to elevate the bookcases by 3/4 inch. How so? We simply cut a plywood base with a Skil Saw for the Billys to rest on, perfect!



Once the bookcases were elevated, the baseboard trim fit perfectly in front.



I had to crack up at the IKEA assembly instructions and the little men they use to guide you through the process. Yes, thank you IKEA, two are better than one at assembling these Billys! Once you get the hang of it you can assemble each in about 20 minutes. I confess I was very surprised at the quality of the bookcases too, each cabinet weighs about 100 pounds and the shelves are all adjustable.



The spacing between the four cabinets and the walls turned out to be exactly  $2 \frac{1}{4}$  inches, which the same exact width of the trim I chose to hid the gaps in between each cabinet and between the cabinet and the wall. How lucky is that?



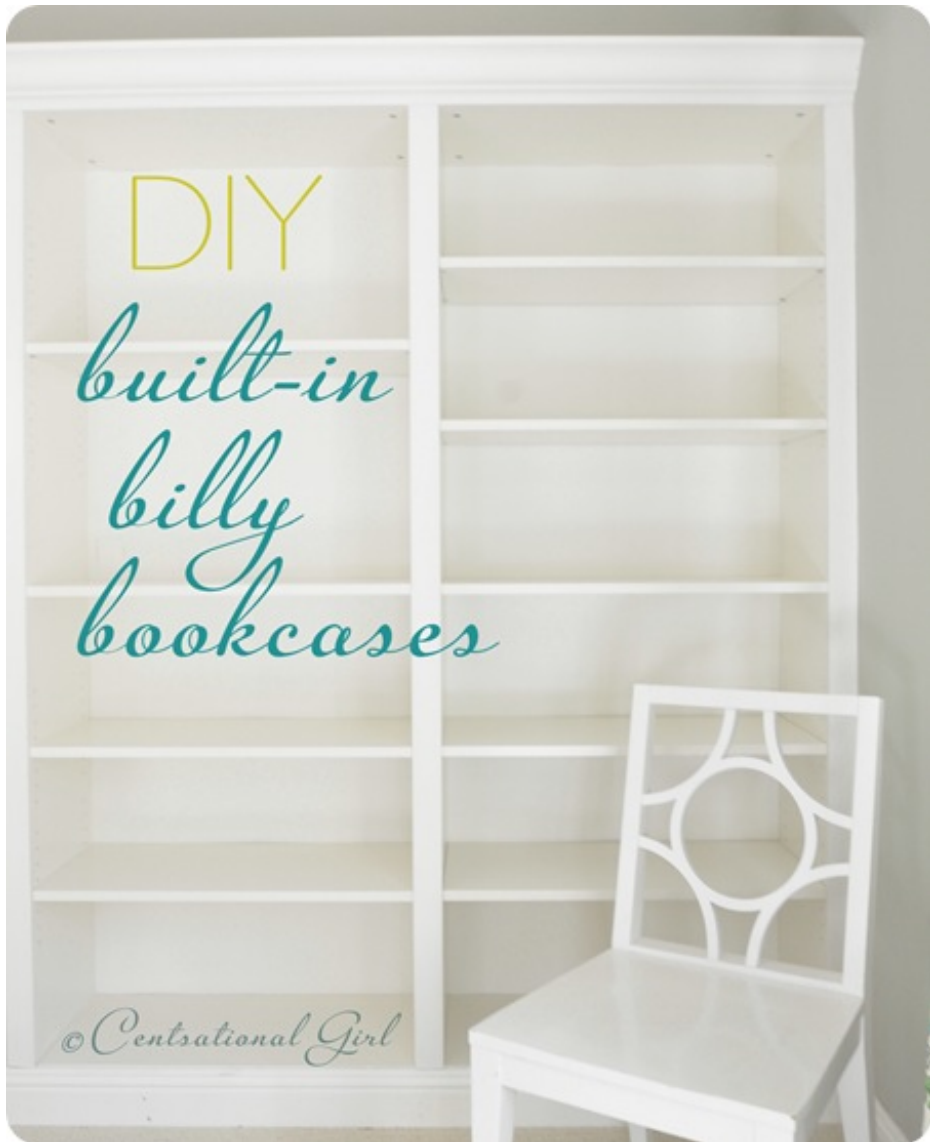
At any other width, we would have had to choose different trim or run it through a table saw, but luckily I found the perfect  $2 \frac{1}{4}$ " trim x  $\frac{1}{4}$ " trim at Lowe's to disguise the gaps to perfection, plus the greater width gives the cabinets even more of a custom look. We also added crown molding to the top for a finishing touch using the same technique I mentioned [here](#).

The vertical pine trim was easily attached with a nail gun then primed with Zinsser (I always use oil based primer on raw wood.) I used paintable caulk to fill in any gaps between the baseboard, crown, and bookcase edges. Two coats of paint unified the vertical trim, baseboard, and crown.\*



The final issue was providing access to the existing outlets on the wall, so to use them anytime in the future, I just notched their location on the back of the cabinets with a box cutter (not shown).

All four cabinets are reinforced with another long strip of plywood across the top that is the same size as the base piece of plywood. That plywood top is nailed into the Billy's frame and then anchored to the studs in the wall with 'L' brackets so the entire unit is sturdy and there's no danger of them falling even if little munchkins should be so bold and try to climb on them. The crown along the top hides both the plywood stabilizer and the brackets from view.



Now the real fun begins, how to make them function for us as storage but also look stylish. I'm thinking I'll definitely paint the back and play off the blues, greens, and yellow in the [window panels](#). Looking at the room now there's too much white, but [this wood pedestal table](#) will help ground the space and provide dark contrast.

How do ya like this fun pair of accent chairs I found at a local second hand shop, aren't they fab? I love them gloss white but I'm tempted to spray them a bold hue for a fun punch of color like [this yellow barstool](#) or [this aqua chair](#).



*paint  
back of  
cabinets*

*paint  
chairs?*

I'll be working on styling the bookcases later this week (following most of the tips from [this article](#)) and hopefully I'll have something to show you soon. A blank canvas, how fun!





Cost: four 15" deep Billy bookcases at \$69 each (\$300 with tax), plus plywood, crown molding and trim: \$65

**Total = \$365**

Not a bad price for sturdy wall to wall built-in bookcases completed in a weekend.

\* update: many asked about paint colors. The wall color is 'Camouflage' by Benjamin Moore and the paint on the trim on the bookcases is Valspar's 'Dove White'. Valspar's 'Cream Delight' and 'Ivory Dust' are also very close matches to the IKEA white.

\*\* update #2: if you'd like to see how they turned out when styled with books and collectibles, take a peek at [this follow up post](#).

Thanks [Apartment Therapy](#) for the feature!!

Tags: [billy bookcase](#), [built in bookcase](#), [ikea](#)

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