



What's Underfoot: Carpet Care¹

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Regular Care

Regular care is essential for maintaining the appearance and wear life of your carpet. The amount of cleaning required depends on how much traffic the area receives, where the carpet is located, and environmental conditions. Routine vacuuming, responding quickly to spills and stains, shampooing and professional cleaning periodically are necessary for maintaining your carpet. Even a poorly constructed carpet will last longer if it is properly maintained.

Vacuuming Schedule

Carpet in most homes should be vacuumed once a week to remove surface litter. Areas where children or pets live and play may need to be vacuumed daily. The carpet in seldom-used rooms may need vacuuming every other week.

Dirt and Debris

Four types of dirt and debris soil carpeting:

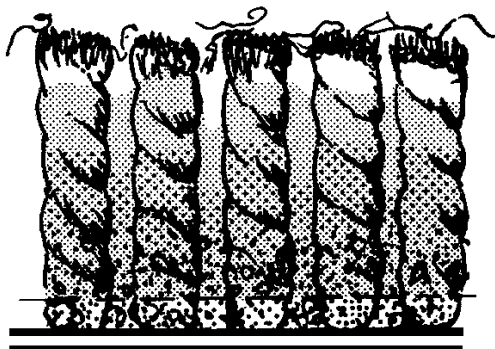
- **Surface litter** — lint, hair, thread ravelings, sewing scraps, paper, crumbs, wood shavings and tobacco particles.
- **Light dust particles** — face powder, tobacco ash, fine sand and dust in the air.
- **Gritty dirt** — sand, gravel and mud.
- **Carpet grease** — a sticky substance contributing as much as 5 percent of the total weight of carpet dirt, which is made up of tracked-in rubber and asphalt combined with greasy particles from cooking fumes, tobacco fumes and exhaust fumes.

Surface litter is fairly easy to remove by hand and with a vacuum cleaner. Light dirt particles can be removed best with a vacuum cleaner that agitates the pile.

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Dirt Buildup

Figure 1.

Since much of Florida is sandy, carpets need to be vacuumed often to prevent sand from settling at the bottom of the carpet. After sand settles at the bottom, it is difficult to remove and causes wear and pile loss. Dirt can dull or change carpeting colors. The gritty dirt settles at the bottom of the carpet, and once it is embedded, it is difficult to remove (See *Figure 1*). The sharp edges of these particles press against the pile fibers when people or pets walk on the carpet. This causes the fibers to break. Vacuum thoroughly to remove hidden sand. Use an effective vacuum cleaner that features a powerful airflow, a high-efficiency filtration and internally-housed vacuum bag and correct brush height adjustment.

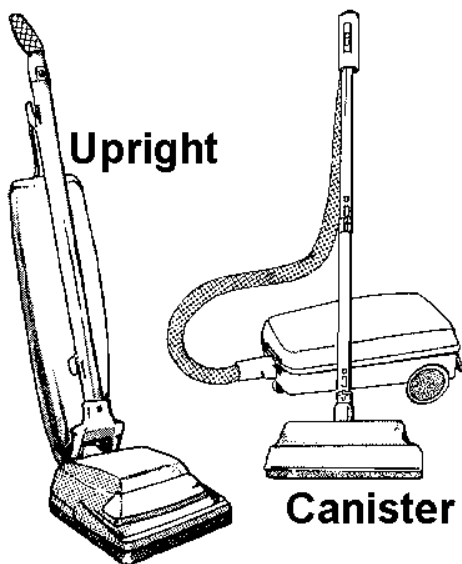


Figure 2.

Carpet grease, which results from the buildup of litter and gritty dirt over time, holds the dirt particles together and causes them to cling tightly to the pile.

These dirt particles are difficult to remove, and dull the color of the carpet. Vacuuming and shampooing will help to restore the color of the carpet.

Vacuum Cleaner Types

For large, heavy rugs or wall-to-wall carpet, use an **upright vacuum cleaner** (See *Figure 2*). The revolving agitator brush and beater vibrate the carpet and bring the heavy grit to the surface and deposit it, along with the surface litter, into a bag. When vacuuming with an upright, use slow even strokes. Use good quality bags for the best results.

The **canister**, or tank, **straight-suction vacuum cleaner** has an attachment with a revolving agitator brush and beater, which provides for a deep, thorough cleaning (See *Figure 2*). A straight-suction cleaner will remove surface dust, but will not completely remove embedded dirt. It works more effectively if pressure is applied to the nozzle when pushed and pulled over carpet.

A lightweight cleaner, such as an electric broom or stick cleaner, provides for surface cleaning and is satisfactory for in-between vacuuming and quick surface cleanup. A non-electric carpet sweeper picks up lint, crumbs, dust and other surface litter. It is useful for cleaning outdoor carpeting, since electric household vacuum cleaners are not made for outdoor use (See *Figure 3*).

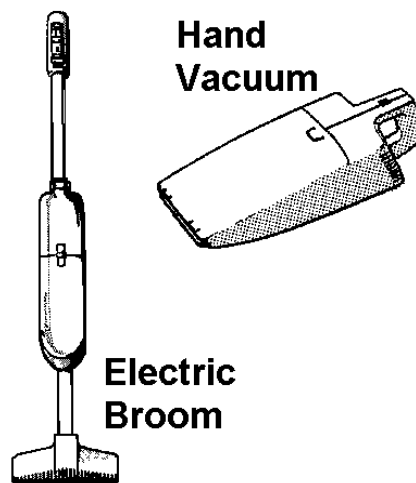


Figure 3.

Battery-operated hand vacuums are useful for removing surface litter and for emergency pick-ups (See *Figure 3*).

Hints for Cleaning

Clean carpet often, and keep the vacuum cleaner in good repair. It is almost impossible to remove embedded dirt. Use the crevice tool of the vacuum cleaner around the edges of wall-to-wall carpeting. Deeply-carved carpet and shag carpet require extra care.

Special Care Problems

- **Shedding**, also called fluffing, is normal for new carpets. Loose bits of fiber left from the finishing process work their way to the surface.
- **Sprouting** occurs when a tuft or yarn rises above the pile surface of a carpet. Do not pull it out. Instead, gently snip it off at the level of the pile.
- **Fading** is promoted by the sun. Protect your carpets from the direct Florida sun. Ozone in the atmosphere also causes carpet to fade, and even to change colors. This occurs more often in unairconditioned homes where heat and humidity are high. Products used to dehumidify a home when it is closed up for a season can attack certain dyes in the carpet. Interior cleaning products that come in contact with carpet, particularly in sunny areas, can cause fading. Give your carpet the same protection you would give any colored fabric.
- **Shading** occurs when all of the pile is not standing erect or going in the same direction. This usually occurs in high traffic areas where a worn path develops. It is more visible with solid-colored velvet or cut-pile weaves.
- A **crushed pile** can sometimes be raised by steaming. Place a dry cloth over the area to prevent scorching or shrinking. Hold the steam iron one inch from the area. After steaming, brush the fibers to restore the nap. The process can be repeated to fluff the carpet more. Use caution in using this process if the carpet is soiled.
- **Uneven wear** can be diminished by rearranging furniture occasionally, or by putting small rugs in areas that receive lots of wear, for example, in front of chairs for viewing TV.
- **Brown spots** sometimes become visible on carpet made with jute or other natural fiber backing. Over-wetting or soaking the carpet fibers increases the size and darkness of the spots. When cleaning, use only enough liquid to wet surface fibers. Blot spots and dry carpet as quickly as possible.
- For minor **cigarette burns** on carpet pile, use small, sharp scissors and carefully snip away the burned fibers. Apply a detergent solution, and then rinse and dry the carpet. For severe burns, it may be necessary to cut out the burned area and replace it with a patch. Depending on the type of carpet, the patch may be invisible, or visible.
- **Mildew** develops with high humidity and poor air circulation. Brush the carpet, and then sponge with a solution made of ½ teaspoon mild powdered non-bleaching laundry detergent to 1 pint of lukewarm water. Let dry. Contact a professional to treat a large area. To prevent mildew, air rooms, use a dehumidifier and remove all clutter so air can circulate around the room and under furniture.
- Blot **animal urine** as quickly as possible. Apply several applications of a lukewarm detergent solution and then apply a solution of white vinegar and lukewarm water (See *Table 1*). Blot up excess moisture, rinse with clear water and let the area dry. If the stain remains, apply a detergent solution. Then reapply the vinegar solution and allow it to remain on the stain 15 minutes. Blot, rinse and dry carpet. This method works well, especially on fresh stains. If the yellow stain remains, further treatment will not restore the color unless a professional carpet cleaner is able to re-dye the spot or the entire rug.

Major Cleanings

Do-It-Yourself Methods

The choice between home cleaning or professional cleaning depends upon the requirements of the particular situation, and the amount of money, time, skills and equipment available.

When you do-it-yourself, it is important to be aware that **not all cleaning agents can be used safely on all fibers and dyes**. This does not mean the product or the item to be cleaned is bad or defective; it just means that they are not compatible. The face yarns of a carpet can be dyed by using many different processes and a wide range of dyes to produce multiple colors. A cleaner can be safe on one color and not on another.

Always read the label carefully. Mix the solution according to directions, and test it in an inconspicuous area, such as in a corner, behind a chair, or in the back of drapery.

You can use several approaches, depending on whether you want to use a wet method or a dry method.

Wet Methods

An **aerosol spray foam** is convenient, dries quickly and is suitable for quick spot cleaning for light soil. It is more expensive than liquid shampoo and may leave a residue. To clean carpeting, spray on a thin layer of foam and then work it in with a wet sponge mop. Let the carpet dry completely. Then vacuum to remove loosened dirt.

The **shampoo method** involves applying a water-detergent solution to a freshly-vacuumed rug with an electrical rug shampooer, a manual applicator, a sponge mop or a hand brush. An electrical shampooer agitates the carpet fibers and works the shampoo into the pile, removing soil. It should not be used on shag carpeting because the long pile can become tangled in the brushes.

You do not have to remove the furniture from the room. To prevent rust or furniture stains, place a thick plastic film or aluminum foil under and around

the legs and bases of furniture until the carpet is completely dry.

After cleaning each section of the carpet, brush the wet pile in one direction with the applicator. When the foam has dried thoroughly, vacuum the rug or carpet to remove dry shampoo and loose dirt.

Steam cleaning, or hot water extraction, is the newest method for home cleaning. Equipment can be rented or purchased for do-it-yourself carpet cleaning. A mixture of hot tap water and special non-foaming detergent is forced into the carpet pile under pressure. The ground-in dirt is loosened or dissolved by the detergent, and the moisture and soil are extracted. Residues from other cleaning methods are also removed. A pre-spotter is available to penetrate stubborn stains, and a defoaming agent can be added to the receiving tank to hold down any foaming action from previous cleaning residues. This method is ideal for shags, as well as other carpets.

Caution: Do not soak the carpet since the backing can become wet and cause brown spots. Shrinkage can occur if the carpet gets too wet. Also, do not go over an area too many times with the shampooing equipment since the agitation can damage the carpet.

Dry Powder Method

This method uses absorbent granules containing a drycleaning fluid and other cleaning agents. Sprinkle the powder over the carpet surface and work it into the pile with a brush. The powder absorbs oils and some dirt, but is less effective on non-greasy stains. Vacuum up when dry. It may be difficult to completely vacuum up the powder, especially on dark carpeting. This method is safe for non-colorfast carpeting.

Professional Methods

Professional cleaning can be done at home or in a plant. Wall-to-wall carpeting must be cleaned in place. Professional cleaners may be able to replace missing tufts, repair holes or tears, remove spots and re-dye the fibers. The choice of a cleaning method depends on the fiber, texture, amount of soil and amount of furniture that has to be moved.

Professional cleaners can use these cleaning methods in the home.

- **Steam cleaning**, or hot water extraction, is when a solution is forced into the pile at high pressure and loosens the soil. The soil and solution are vacuumed out. Select a reputable dealer.
- The **rotary brush method**, or rotary extraction, uses a detergent solution that is worked into the pile by a brush. Some machines are equipped to vacuum the loosened soil and solution. With do-it-yourself methods it is important to follow instructions carefully and extract all moisture and soil.
- The **dry-absorbent compound cleaning method** uses an absorbent compound containing drycleaning agents and detergents that are sprinkled over the surface of the carpet. This is brushed into the carpet pile with a special machine, and then vacuumed to remove the attached soil and the compound.
- In the **hand-absorption method** a foam is generated from a detergent solution and worked into the carpet with sponges. The loosened soil is removed by clean sponges. This process is done by hand.
- The **dry-foam method** contains only a small amount of water that is mechanically worked into the surface and vacuumed. This is an effective method.

No method of cleaning is better than the operator. Check with carpet retailers and friends and neighbors. The Better Business Bureau or the Chamber of Commerce may also have information about a particular firm.

Spots and Stains

Common Spots and Stains

Success in removing a stain depends on the fiber, the spilled substance, proper identification of the substance, the time lapse before removal is attempted, and the agent used to remove the stain.

Certain materials have proven to be more effective on certain stains. These supplies are important to have on hand:

- blotting materials such as paper towels, facial tissues, paper napkins, white sheeting, bath towels
- liquid rug shampoo or light-duty liquid detergent
- white vinegar
- ammonia
- nail polish remover
- drycleaning (grease) solvents such as Carbona or K2r

To remove common spots and stains, follow the general steps outlined below, and refer to *Table 1* for selecting the appropriate cleaner.

1. Act quickly.
2. Absorb as much of the staining substance as possible using a blotting material. Blot lightly to keep from driving the stain into the fibers and spreading it.
3. Select the right cleaner for the stain
4. Pretest the cleaner in an inconspicuous place.
5. Use drycleaning solvents in a well-ventilated area and use sparingly to avoid further damage to the carpet.
6. Apply a small amount of cleaner and work gently from the edges of the soiled area to the center to avoid spreading the spot or stain. Blot up moisture as you proceed. Never rub or scrub the stain.
7. Avoid soaking or overwetting the carpet.
8. Dry rug or carpet quickly by placing about a half-inch layer of paper towels or other blotting material over the damp area and weighing it down. In some cases, a fan or a hair dryer will

help speed drying time, especially in humid weather.

9. When the area is completely dry, brush the pile gently to restore the nap. Vacuum thoroughly.
10. When in doubt about removal of a particular stain, consult a professional carpet cleaner for advice.

Chemical Spots and Stains

According to the Carpet and Rug Institute, chemical stains are becoming more and more prevalent due to higher usage of these substances in home and business environments. With common stains, the carpet is stained or discolored by foreign materials; with chemical stains the dye is either destroyed or changed.

Many of the chemical spots require moisture to trigger the reaction, for this reason the discoloration may show up shortly after the carpet is cleaned with the carpet cleaner being blamed. What can be done about these chemical spots? Unfortunately, little can be done to correct the spot since the dye is either destroyed or changed chemically and cannot be restored by cleaning or treating. Generally speaking, spots resulting from chemical spills are not covered under warranties since they are not defects in the carpet.

Identifying a chemical spot is sometimes difficult, but should be attempted to prevent future mishaps. Ask yourself these questions:

- Where is the spot located? If bedroom or TV area, could it be acne medication? If near the baseboards, maybe insecticides?
- Was it spilled or tracked? Spills generally cover a larger area near the backing. Tracking usually limits the spot to the tips of the tufts.
- Is there a pattern? Handprints from acne preparations, and footprints from swimming pool chemicals?
- Is there an odor? Spots smell different from normal carpet.

In general, the following guides can be useful in determining the cause for discoloration:

Dye spots from the manufacturing process are always darker than the background, never lighter.

Yellow indicates an oxidation reaction by strong oxidizers or bleaches.

Green or blue indicates sunlight along with a catalyst.

Red spots on a tan or beige carpet may suggest strong acids.

Refer to *Table 2* to find the cause of the more common chemical problems. Prevention is always a good solution.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPOT AND STAIN REMOVAL				
To remove a certain stain, try the first removal method indicated for that particular stain. If the primary recommendation does not work, then try the second lettered method. Proceed to other methods in the order listed if the stain prevails.				
Type of Stain	Removal methods in recommended order			
	First	Second	Third	Fourth
ACIDS	E	F		
AIRPLANE GLUE	C	B		
ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES	A	E	D	F
AMMONIA	D	E		
BALLPOINT INK	C	B	A	E
BATTERY ACID	E	F		
BLACK COFFEE OR TEA	A	D	F	
BLACK GREASE	C	B	A	F
BLEACH	A	F		
BLOOD	A	E		
BUTTER	B	A	E	D
CANDY	A	E	D	F
CARBOLIC ACID DISINFECTANT	E	F		
CATSUP	A	E	D	F
CHEWING GUM	Rub with ice and scrape gently with a dull knife	B		
CHOCOLATE	A	E	D	F
CIGARETTE BURN	A	F		
COLOGNE	A	E	D	F
COLORED PAPER	A	E	D	F
COOKING OIL	B	A	E	F
COSMETICS	C	B	A	E
CRAYON	B	A	F	
FOOD DYE	B	A	E	D
FURNITURE DYE	C	B	A	E
FURNITURE POLISH	C	B	A	E
FURNITURE POLISH (WATER BASED)	A	E	D	F
FRUIT JUICES	A	E	D	F
GLUE (PLASTIC BASE)	C	B	A	E

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Type of Stain	Removal methods in recommended order			
	First	Second	Third	Fourth
GRASS	C	B	A	D
GREASY FOOD STAINS	B	A	E	D
HAND CREAM	B	A	E	F
ICE CREAM	A	E	D	F
INDELIBLE INK	C	B	A	E
INDIA INK	C	B	A	F
IODINE	B	A	E	D
LACQUER	C	B	A	F
LIPSTICK	C	B	A	E
LYE	D	A	F	
MASCARA	B	A	F	
MAYONNAISE	B	A	E	F
MEDICINES	C	B	A	E
METAL POLISH	C	B		
MILDEW	A	E	F	
MILK	B	A	E	F
MUD	A	F		
MUSTARD	A	D	F	
NAIL POLISH	C	B	A	E
NEWSPRINT	B	A	F	
OIL, CAR	B	A	E	F
OIL, LINSEED	B	A	E	F
OINTMENT	B	A	E	D
OVEN CLEANER	D	A	F	
PAINT CLEANER	C	B	A	E
PAINT, LATEX	A	E	F	
PAINT, OIL	C	B	A	E
PLANT FOOD	A	E	D	F
PLASTER	A	F		
ROUGE	B	A	F	
RUBBER CEMENT	C	B	A	F

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Type of Stain	Removal methods in recommended order			
	First	Second	Third	Fourth
RUST	D	A	F	
SALAD DRESSING	B	A	F	
SALAD OIL	B	A	F	
SAUCES	B	A	E	D
SHELLAC	C	B	A	E
SHOE POLISH	C	B	A	E
SOFT DRINKS	A	C	E	D
SOOT	B	A	F	
STARCHY FOOD	A	E	D	F
SYRUP	A	E	F	
TAR	B	A		
TOOTHPASTE	A	D	E	F
UNKNOWN STAIN	C	B	A	D
URINE	A	D		
VARNISH	C	B	A	E
VASELINE	B	A	F	
VOMIT	A	E	D	F
WASHABLE INK	A	E	D	F
WAX CANDLES	C	B		
WINE	B	A	D	

A. DETERGENT MIX - Mix 1 teaspoon mild non-bleaching detergent with one cup of lukewarm water

B. DRY CLEANING SOLVENT - Apply dry cleaning solvent to stain (Carbona or K2r)

C. NAIL POLISH REMOVER - Amyl acetate (banana fragrance). Follow with the detergent mix. Some dyestuffs are not completely "fast" to polish remover. It is important to test in an inconspicuous area. If these cleaning methods are not effective, consult a professional.

D. VINEGAR SOLUTION - Mix 1/3 cup white vinegar to 1/3 cup lukewarm water.

E. AMMONIA SOLUTION - Mix 1 tablespoon ammonia to 3/4 to 1 cup water.

F. WARM WATER - Use lukewarm tap water.

Source: *Spot and Stain Removal Guide*, The Carpet and Rug Institute.

Table 1

CHEMICAL REACTIONS AND CARPET DAMAGE AFFECTING DYE				
HOUSEHOLD PRODUCT	CHEMICAL	REACTION	CONDITION	DAMAGE
Toilet Bowl Cleaner Tile Grout Cleaner	Some toilet bowl cleaners contain hydrochloric acid and coloring agents Phosphoric acid	Acid may dissolve nylon while the coloring agents stain		Some dyes turn bright red
Acne Medication Pet Shampoo/ Mange Remedy	Numerous products are available over the counter that contain benzoyl peroxide Benzoyl peroxide is in some of these products	Strong oxidizing agent is capable of destroying most dyestuffs used in carpet	Relatively high humidity is necessary for bleaching action to begin The time between the contact and appearance of the spot could be days Spots can look and feel chalky from presence of bentonite (fullers earth) to absorb skin oils	Spots begin as orange to yellow as the dye is bleached and progress to lighter yellow as oxidation proceeds. On blue carpet, spots can appear slightly pink, or exhibit an orange ring or halo that moves outward as the spot grows. Other household textiles can be affected.
Bleaches	Chlorine bleach (sodium hypochlorite) "all fabric" oxygen bleaches Swimming pool chemicals Mildew killers that contain bleach	All can cause bleaching and dye bleeding but are slower acting Affects textiles if used indoors		Yellow spots occur Bleaches carpet
Drain Cleaners Strong Alkalis Oven Cleaners	Sodium hydroxide (lye) Sodium hypochlorite (bleach) Jelled sodium hydroxide			Bleaching occurs Bleaching occurs
Industrial solvents (for pain, arthritis, backache, injuries, muscular aches)	DMSO (dimethylsulfoxide)	Clear liquid smells like garlic		Loss of color on carpet is due to solvent
Insecticides	DDVP, Malathion, Orthene, Sumithion (most common in consumer products that claim to be safe on the label but may not be)	Application of chemical applied in stream instead of a fan-shaped mist to the baseboards. An overall misting can be used for fleas.	Chemicals mentioned are in some off-the-shelf insecticides, which have labels that recommend use on carpet.	Products can change dye colors chemically. Example: red dyes in a beige color turn to blue, giving a green cast. Humidity influences color change.
Plant Food		Causes oxidation spots, usually near backing and then progresses upward to the surface. Spot may not be apparent for months.	Spills of liquid plant foods or leakage from flower pots	Dull yellow or brown in color

CHEMICAL REACTIONS AND CARPET DAMAGE AFFECTING DYE				
HOUSEHOLD PRODUCT	CHEMICAL	REACTION	CONDITION	DAMAGE
Urine			Spots begin at the backing and progress upward. The ammonia-like odor eventually becomes a musty odor.	Dull yellow or red. Clean with lukewarm water and apply a solution of half water/half vinegar.
Vomit (human or animal)	Hydrochloric acid			Causes spots if not cleaned up well or neutralized with baking soda or an ammonia solution.

Source: *Chemical Spots and Stains on Carpet and Rugs*, The Carpet and Rug Institute, 1982.

Table 2