

GETTING THE MOST FROM YOUR CARPET

New carpet represents a substantial investment and, like your other fine furnishings, requires proper care to keep it attractive over the years to come. Carpet rarely wears out in terms of fiber wearing away, but its appearance deteriorates over time and becomes less attractive. You can protect your investment, prolong the life of your carpet, and improve the quality and beauty of the indoor environment by establishing a regular maintenance schedule.

THE CARPET CARE PROGRAM

A comprehensive carpet care program consists of four elements:

- 1) Preventive maintenance.
- 2) Regular vacuuming.
- 3) Removal of spots and spills.
- 4) Overall cleaning on a regular basis.

PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE

- 1) Walk-off mats should be used at all entrances to absorb soil and moisture, and mats should be cleaned on a regular basis so they don't become sources of soil themselves, especially during inclement weather. Try to keep your sidewalks and entranceways free of excessive dirt and substances which can be tracked into the home.
- 2) Use a quality pad under your carpet, particularly on stairs. A good quality pad not only gives better resilience under foot, but it can also add to the life of your carpet. Some carpets carry warranties with specific density and thickness requirements. Before purchasing your carpet, review your warranty.
- 3) Move heavy furniture occasionally to avoid excessive pile crushing. Put coasters intended for use with carpet under the legs of tables, chairs, and other furniture to help distribute the weight and prevent crushing the pile. Do not use chairs or appliances with rollers or casters on carpet without a chair pad designed for carpet. Continued use without a chair pad can cause damage to the carpet.
- 4) When moving heavy wheeled furniture (pianos, buffets, etc.), prevent damage by placing a protective barrier of heavy cardboard or plywood between the wheels and the carpet.
- 5) If you use area rugs over your carpet, be sure to remove and clean them regularly. Clean and restore the pile of the carpet underneath. Be certain to check area rugs for colorfastness before putting them back over carpet, as the dyes in some rugs may bleed through to carpet. After cleaning your carpet, remember to allow complete drying before replacing rugs.

- 6) Protect your carpet from prolonged periods of direct sunlight with blinds, shades, or awnings.

PLEASE NOTE: NO CARPET IS ABSOLUTELY STAIN PROOF. SOME CARPETS HAVE STAIN RESISTANT TREATMENTS TO IMPROVE YOUR ABILITY TO CLEAN UP STAINS, NOT PREVENT STAINS. CARPETS WITH SOIL RESISTANT TREATMENTS REDUCE THE RATE OF SOILING, BUT ALL CARPETS REQUIRE REGULAR CARE AND MAINTENANCE.

Stain Versus Soiling

It should be noted that there is often confusion about the difference between soiling and staining, and the majority of stain complaints are actually soil-related. For example, many sugar-based spills, such as soft drinks and coffee, leave a sugar residue after removal; this sticky residue readily attracts soil from ordinary shoe traffic, and the resulting discolored area appears to be a stain. The same thing happens when spills are cleaned with a detergent solution and the area is not sufficiently rinsed with plain water, leaving a sticky detergent residue. It is important to rinse thoroughly with water and blot dry after removing any spill.

VACUUMING

The most important step in caring for your carpet is vacuuming. Vacuum thoroughly and frequently, particularly in high-traffic areas. Bear in mind that walking on soiled carpet permits the soil particles to work their way below the surface of the pile where they are far more difficult to remove and can damage the fibers. Frequent vacuuming removes these particles from the surface before this happens.

For rooms with *light traffic*, vacuum the traffic lanes twice weekly and the entire area once weekly. Those areas with *heavier traffic* require that the traffic lanes be vacuumed daily and the entire area twice weekly. Up to *three passes* of the machine will suffice for *light soiling*, but *five to seven passes* are necessary for *heavily soiled areas*. Change the vacuuming direction occasionally to help stand the pile upright and reduce matting.

Vacuum Cleaner Recommendations:

To ensure that your vacuum will conform to the highest industry standards, make sure that your vacuum cleaner is certified through the **Carpet and Rug Institute (CRI) Vacuum Cleaner Indoor Air Quality Program**. Visit www.carpet-rug.com for details and listings.

- 1) A good vacuum cleaner is vital to prolonging the beauty and life of your carpet. An inexpensive machine can remove surface dirt but will not effectively remove the hidden dirt and particles embedded in the pile.
- 2) The Carpet Department recommends the use of vacuums with a rotating brush or combination beater/brush bar that agitates the carpet pile and mechanically loosens soil for removal by the vacuum.

Note that carpet with thick loop pile construction may be sensitive to brushing or rubbing of the pile surface and may become fuzzy. For these products, The Carpet Department recommends the use of a suction-only vacuum or a vacuum with an adjustable brush lifted away from the carpet so it does not agitate the pile. A vacuum with a beater/brush bar can be tested on an inconspicuous area of the carpet and used if no excessive fuzzing occurs.

- 3) Replaceable paper vacuum bags do a better job of trapping the small particles that pass through cloth bags back into the room. High efficiency vacuum bags, also called microfiltration bags, trap even smaller microscopic particles such as mold and mildew spores and dust mite byproducts, often found to be a source of allergies. All vacuum bags should be checked often and replaced when half full.
- 4) Make sure the belt is in good condition and that the brush or beater bar rotates when in contact with the carpet. To adjust the vacuum to the correct height setting for the carpet, raise the beater/brush bar to the highest setting and then lower it until it contacts the pile enough to slightly vibrate the carpet several inches away from the machine, but not low enough to cause significant slowing of the motor.
- 5) Change the vacuuming direction occasionally to help stand the pile upright and help reduce matting.

SPOT AND SPILL REMOVAL

A good checklist to handle spills should include the following items. Do not use any household cleaners other than those listed, since many household products contain chemicals that may permanently damage your carpet.

- 1) A solution of a mild liquid detergent (no more than $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of detergent to 32 ounces of water). A **clear, non-bleach** liquid dishwashing detergent such as *Dawn*, *Joy*, or **clear Ivory** is recommended. Do not use detergents that are cloudy or creamy because they may leave a sticky residue.
- 2) A solution of 1 part white vinegar to 1 part water.
- 3) White cloths or white paper towels.
- 4) An ammonia solution of one tablespoon of ammonia to one cup of water. **Do not use on wool or wool-blend products.**
- 5) Non-oily nail polish remover.
- 6) Chewing gum remover (freeze or solid type).
- 7) Spot remover specifically for grease, oil, or tar, such as Carbona or Energine.

NOTE: Difficult stains on carpets made from solution-dyed fibers such as polypropylene (olefin) and solution-dyed nylon may be removed with a mild bleach solution (one part chlorine bleach to five parts water).

WARNING: Do not use bleach solution unless you are absolutely certain your carpet is 100% solution dyed. Carpet dyed by other systems will be damaged; if in doubt, call the manufacturer.

General Instructions

Prompt attention to spots and spills is essential. No carpet is stain proof, although many are stain resistant, which allows time to act.

- Remove as much of **food spills** as possible by scraping gently with a spoon or dull knife.
- Absorb **wet spills** as quickly as possible by blotting repeatedly with white paper or cloth towels.
- Always blot; never rub or scrub abrasively, as a fuzzy area may result. When blotting, work from the outer edge in toward the center of the spot to avoid spreading the spill.
- Always follow up with water to remove detergent residue that may become sticky and cause rapid re-soiling.
- Draw out any remaining moisture by placing several layers of white towels over the spot and weigh them down with a heavy object that will not transfer color, such as a plastic jug of water.

Stain Removal Procedures

The recommendations of Page 6 should be used for spot cleaning. The numbers are keyed to the stain, and all instructions should be used in the recommended sequence. Some stains are marked **PRO**, indicating that professional knowledge and equipment are necessary.

- A. Water Soluble Stains** – Absorb as much as possible with **white** towels. Blot the stained area with white towels dampened with cool water until there is no more transfer of the stain onto the towels.

If any of the stain remains, use the detergent solution previously described. Spray lightly onto the spot and blot repeatedly with white towels, working from the outer edge in toward the center of the spot to avoid spreading.

Rinse thoroughly by spraying with clean water, and then blot or extract. Do not use too much detergent because the residue will contribute to rapid re-soiling.

- A-1** As in **A**, but before using detergent, apply the white vinegar solution to a white towel and blot or spray onto spot.

A-2 As in **A**, but before using detergent, apply a household ammonia solution to a white towel and blot or spray onto spot. **Do not use on wool or wool-blend carpet.** Rinse as in **A**.

B. Oil-Based Stains – Blot as much as possible with white paper towels. Apply the special oil and grease spot remover to a paper towel and repeat blotting. (Protective gloves should be worn, as the solvent will quickly remove oils from the skin and could result in irritation.) Do not pour or spray directly on the carpet pile, as damage to the backing or adhesive underneath could result; use the towels to transport the solvent to the carpet. Repeat as often as necessary.

Provide adequate ventilation! Do not use flammable solvents! Follow with procedures in **A**.

C. Freeze stains such as chewing gum and candle wax with ice or a commercially available product in an aerosol can. Shatter with a blunt object and vacuum before the chips soften. Follow up with solvent as in **B**.

D. Bleach – **WARNING** – Only carpets which are **solution dyed** are resistant to bleaching, but do not exceed the recommended concentration. **DO NOT USE THIS PROCEDURE UNLESS YOU ARE ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN THE CARPET IS SOLUTION DYED – CARPETS DYED BY OTHER SYSTEMS WILL BE DAMAGED.** Products with olefin and nylon blends can not be exposed to bleach without removing the color from the nylon fibers unless the nylon component is solution dyed. **If in doubt, call the manufacturer.**

For solution-dyed carpets with stains such as food dyes, fruit drink, and coffee not removed by **A-1**, use a solution of one part chlorine bleach to five parts water.

Rinse several times with water to remove excess bleach so that none is tracked to the other areas where there is conventionally dyed carpet.

PRO – Professional Cleaner.

CLEANING

Even though vacuuming can remove most of the dry soil, it is also necessary to clean your carpet on a regular basis to remove the oily, sticky soil that builds up in the pile as a result of cooking vapors, air pollution, and tracked-in-dirt. The particles of oily soil deposited on carpet fibers can cause gradual but significant dulling of delicate pastel colors; the color isn't lost but is hidden under the film. If this type of soil is allowed to accumulate, it begins to attract and hold the dry soil. This is the reason cleaning is so important when dulling of the color is first noticed; if allowed to remain too long, it become gummy and difficult to remove.

SPECIFIC STAIN REMOVAL PROCEDURES	
STAIN	REMOVAL PROCEDURE
Alcoholic Beverages	A
Asphalt	B, PRO
Beer	A
Betadine	PRO
Berries	A
Blood (wet)	A
Blood (dry)	A-2
Butter	B
Chewing Gum	C
Chocolate	A-2
Coffee	A-1 (D if necessary)
Cola Drinks	A
Cosmetics	A (D if necessary)
Crayon	B
De-icer (Calcium Chloride)	Vacuum, A
Excrement	A
Food Dyes	A
Furniture Polish	A, B, PRO
Glue (White)	A
Gravy	A
Grease (Auto)	B, PRO
Grease (Food)	B
Ice Cream	A
Ink (Ballpoint)	B, PRO
Ink (Permanent)	B, (D if necessary)
Ink (Washable)	A, PRO
Jelly	A
Lipstick	B
Milk	A
Mud	A
Mustard	A (D, if necessary)
Nail Polish	Polish Remover
Paint (Latex, wet)	A
Paint (Latex, dry)	B
Paint (Oil)	B, PRO
Rust	PRO
Shoe Polish	B
Tea	A (D, if necessary)
Urine	A-1, PRO
Vomit	A-1
Wax	C
Wine	A-2

WARNING: Certain products found in most homes can cause irreparable damage to your carpet. Bleaches, tile cleaners, mildew removers, oven cleaners, and drain openers are very strong chemicals that can discolor or dissolve carpet fibers. Acne medications containing benzoyl peroxide, a very powerful bleach, are capable of permanently damaging your carpet and most other fabrics as well.

If a carpet is cleaned before it becomes too unsightly, the cleaning chore will be easier and more successful. It is a myth that cleaning the carpet before it is absolutely necessary will cause it to get dirty faster. Carpet in a typical household should be cleaned every 12 to 18 months depending upon the number of residents and amount and type of activity.

Choice of the proper cleaning system is important. Some systems may leave residues which promote re-soiling and defeat the whole purpose of cleaning. The recommendations below represent the best current knowledge and should help prolong the time between cleanings.

The Cleaning System

The Carpet Department recommends the hot water extraction system, which research indicates provides the best capability for cleaning. This system is commonly referred to as “steam cleaning,” although no steam is actually generated. The process consists of applying a cleaning agent onto the pile and using water in the extractor to recover the used solution and soil. This can be done from a truck-mounted unit outside the home with only the hose and wand brought inside or, where a truck-mounted unit cannot reach, by a portable system brought into the home.

Professional Carpet Cleaners – It is to your advantage to use professional cleaners because their experience enables them to do a better job than you can do yourself. Their equipment has more extraction power than the rental units available to you, and the carpet should dry more quickly. True professionals have also made the investment in training to understand the equipment, to know the proper cleaning agents for the situation at hand, and to recognize the differences in fibers and carpet construction.

Do-It-Yourself Systems – If you decide to rent a steam-cleaning machine and do it yourself, check several cleaning systems before making a selection. Most rental units available do not adequately clean and may actually damage the carpet. Consider the following:

- 1) Some rental companies have cleaning equipment that is similar to what the professionals use. The cleaning equipment should have enough vacuum power to allow the carpet to dry within 6 to 12 hours after cleaning. Avoid rental units found in many retail and grocery stores that do not have enough power to extract the cleaning solution from the carpet adequately and which may actually damage the carpet due to overwetting.
- 2) Avoid overwetting the carpet. Prolonged dampness may promote growth of mildew and bacteria in the carpet or cause separation of the backing. A carpet that is wet for more than 24 hours could develop a growth of mold and mildew.

This is controlled by a combination of proper equipment and operator training. Most problems in do-it-yourself cleaning are due to overwetting and use of excessive detergent.

- 3) Use a cleaning solution with a pH less than 10, preferably near 9, and with a minimum of nonsticky residue. The attraction between the detergent and the particles

of soil and oil is critical during the cleaning process. However, the detergent residue continues to attract the particles after cleaning. Increasing the amount of cleaning solution beyond the recommended level does not greatly increase cleaning performance, but makes the removal of detergent more difficult. Because buildup of detergent residue is the most common cause of accelerated re-soiling complaints, do not use extra cleaning solution. The Carpet Department recommends a clear water rinse after cleaning.

- 4) Carpet with stain resistant treatments must be cleaned with products formulated for this purpose, or the stain resistance will be impaired and the warranty voided. Do not use cleaning or spotting solutions that contain bleaches or optical brighteners because they can discolor the carpet.
- 5) Do not use any silicone-based anti-soil treatments on carpets produced by certain manufacturers. The only anti-soil products approved for use as needed after the cleaning process are either DuPont Teflon[®] or 3M Scotchgard[™].
- 6) Reduce drying time by using several fans to move air across the carpet in combination with a dehumidifier or air conditioner to pull moisture out of the air. Carpet should be dry within 12 hours; even less is better.

Bonnet Cleaning Systems - Bonnet cleaning systems employ a rotating bonnet of terry cloth or other absorbent material to agitate the carpet pile and absorb soil. A detergent solution is sprayed onto the pile and then worked with the bonnet attached to a rotary floor polisher.

The Carpet Department does not recommend this cleaning system. The bonnet system has very limited capability for soil removal and leaves much of the detergent in the pile since it employs no real extraction. As a result, rapid re-soiling often occurs. Another disadvantage is that the spinning bonnet may distort the fibers of cut pile carpet, fuzzing the pile and leaving distinct swirl marks.

CARPET PERFORMANCE CHARACTERISTICS

Sprouting – If loose ends or “sprouts” extend above the rest of the pile, clip them off even with the pile surface. Never try to pull them out. After clipping, smooth the area with your fingers. Sharp edges on your vacuum cleaner, a child’s toy, high heels, or animal claws can cause this condition.

Pile Crushing - All carpet fibers will crush under heavy stationary loads. Crushing can be reduced by shifting furniture regularly.

Crushed areas can usually be improved by covering the area with a damp, clean white cloth and then applying heat to the cloth with an electric iron on the lowest setting. To ensure that the iron does not damage carpet fibers, test carpet in an inconspicuous location such as a closet. Remove the cloth and restore the pile while it is still hot by brushing it lightly. Keep traffic off the carpet until it is dry.

Shading – After certain carpet styles have been subjected to traffic, you may notice areas that appear lighter or darker than other areas. Don't be alarmed. Shading is the result of the change in direction of the pile due to pressure from footsteps and vacuuming. Brushing the pile all in one direction may temporarily correct shading; however, shading is part of the carpet styling and should be expected to varying degrees. Do not mistake shading for color fading.