



CARPET CLEANING

101

By JOE DENMAN

Undoubtedly, you spent a lot of time and effort to pick just the right carpet for your home. The average person spends about 3 months from the time one first thinks of new carpet until the day it is actually installed. That's a lot of time to fall in love with the look of your new floor.

Carpets manufactured today are designed to provide years of service. Fiber technology and carpet construction methods have developed floor fabrics capable of retaining their original look, feel and style far longer than their predecessors. This, of course, assumes that you show your carpet the kind of love and understanding it deserves.

While feelings you have for your new carpet are different from those for your family members, you must show your floor some regular love, too. A little goes a long way in preserving its texture and beauty.

It's regular vacuuming, quick spot removal and annual professional cleaning that will maintain the look you love, and extend the life of your carpet.

Joe Denman is a floor covering expert, having been in the industry for nearly two decades. He's worked with every type of floor covering, served as an advisory council member for major manufacturers, been in demand as a guest speaker and directed clinics throughout the industry. Joe recently was certified as a carpet cleaning technician by the Institute of Inspection, Cleaning, and Restoration Certification.



Vacuum Regularly

The single most important step you can take to increase your carpet's longevity is to vacuum it regularly. This is because the majority of the soiling within your carpet is composed of dry particulate and can most easily be removed by vacuuming. Left uncared for, your carpet will allow the forces of gravity to let the dry particulate settle into the pile of your carpet. When this happens, normal foot traffic will cause the soil to abrade the fibers (like sandpaper!), thus giving your floor a worn and dingy look. Once this occurs, no amount of cleaning will restore the original luster.

A good rule of thumb to determine the right vacuuming plan for your home is as easy as counting — one, two, three. Light soiling, as in the case of households with one or two occupants, requires once a week vacuuming. If you have children in the home, you should increase vacuuming to twice a week. Homes with large families, pets, smokers or unusually high foot traffic will need vacuuming at least three times or more per week.

Treating Spots and Spills

Removing spots before they become permanent stains helps maintain the overall appearance of your carpet. Two hundred square yards of carpet can easily look bad because of 2 square inches of permanent stains. Accidental spills and spots are an everyday part of life. Treating them requires a little time and patience.

Most spots can easily be removed with water or a neutral (pH around 7) spotting cleaner. The key to effective spot removal is acting in a timely manner. As a spot sits on the carpet, it begins to attack and attach itself to the fibers. Any reputable carpet store can direct you to the proper cleaning product or manufacturer's website that will give you complete instructions to remove the spot. Avoid using grocery or mail-order products, as many of these items will actually void the manufacturer's warranty.

Professional Annual Cleaning

As the new addition to the family — your carpet — approaches its first birthday, it is time to schedule a professional cleaning. It's a little known fact that virtually all fiber producers and carpet manufacturers require a professional cleaning every 12 to 24 months to keep the carpet warranty intact. (Ask your salesperson for details.) If you have a claim during the warranty period, you will likely be asked to produce receipts showing that you had your carpet professionally cleaned.

Hot Water Extraction, commonly referred to as steam cleaning, is the professional method preferred by most makers of residential carpet. After your carpet is vacuumed, a cleaning agent is applied to the pile surface and then agitated. This suspends the soil from the fiber. After a sufficient dwell time, the cleaning agent and soil are extracted from the carpet with a hot water rinse. Thorough Hot Water Extraction is usually done with truck-mounted equipment.

The Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration Certification (IICRC) is an industry association that has created the Standard and Reference Guide for Professional Carpet Cleaning. The IICRC sponsors professional training and certification courses throughout the world. A listing of IICRC certified firms can be found at <http://www.iicrc.org>.

OPPOSITE: Blue Ridge String of Pearls.
AT RIGHT: WundaWeave Island Bungalow in Margarita.

