

Carpet Maintenance Guide

Routine care and cleaning is an important aspect in maintaining the appearance of a carpet. Soiling and staining have a detrimental effect over time on the life of all carpet installations. A comprehensive maintenance program can help in protecting carpeting to achieve its optimum service life.

Soil

Carpet soil is any foreign material tracked onto the face yarn causing a change in visual appearance. Soil composition varies depending on location but may consist of dry components such as sand, clay, cement and peat, and oily components such as motor oil, grease, fats and asphalt. Dry components can typically be removed by vacuuming. Oily components are harder to clean off the carpet and mostly require some kind of cleaning agent for effective removal.

Regular dry soil removal using a vacuum cleaner is one of the important aspects of any carpet maintenance program. Most dry soil is abrasive towards the face yarn and can damage and weaken the yarn. Vacuuming also helps to lift and restore the appearance of the yarn pile. Vacuum cleaners certified through the Carpet and Rug Institute (CRI) Seal of Approval Program must be used. CRI, based in Dalton, Georgia, USA, is one of the leading nonprofit trade associations representing the carpet industry in the United States. Information on certified vacuum cleaners can be found on the CRI website at www.carpet-rug.org. High traffic areas such as entrances and hallways should be vacuumed daily. Other areas with light to medium traffic such as offices and meeting rooms should be vacuumed as needed but at least every two to three days. The use of walk-off mats in entranceways can help minimize the tracking of soil into the building.

Stains

Stains are typically liquids or semi-solids that are absorbed by the face yarn or adhere to the surface of the fiber with a visibly discolored residue. Most stains occur by accidental spills and include soft drinks containing natural or artificial food colorings, coffee, mustard, tomato-based sauces and wine. Solid spills should also be taken seriously as colored components in the solid may migrate over time onto the surface of the carpet causing a stain.

All spills and stains should be treated immediately as follows:

1. Liquid spills should be blotted with a white absorbent cloth or towel until as much liquid is removed as possible. If the liquid is colored, continue blotting until a clean white absorbent cloth or towel used for blotting does not become colored. Do not rub the area of the spill. Rubbing may work the spill deeper into the carpet making the spill more difficult to remove and may damage the yarn itself.
2. Semi-solid spills should be scraped up gently using a spoon or a dull knife.
3. Solid spills should be removed by vacuuming.
4. If a stain occurs, use the spot cleaning guidelines given below.

Spot Cleaning Guidelines

Use water first as the cleaning agent to try to remove any stain. If water does not remove the stain, select the appropriate cleaning agent from the stain selection chart below depending on the type of stain or spill. The same procedure should be used for each cleaning agent selected. Apply the cleaning agents in the order indicated on the chart. If the first cleaning agent removes the stain, it is not necessary to proceed to the next one. Finish with a clean water rinse where indicated. Use of a portable extractor certified by CRI is highly recommended. Follow the instructions given in the portable extractor's user guide. If the type of stain is not listed on the chart or difficulty is experienced in removing the stain.

If a portable extractor is not available, use the following manual procedure:

- Apply the cleaning agent to a white cloth.
- Blot the stain with the wetted cloth. Do not rub the carpet. Do not apply the cleaning agent directly to the carpet or soak the carpet with the cleaning agent.
- Continue blotting until there is no more transfer of the stain color to the cloth.
- Dry the carpet as much as possible by blotting it with a dry white absorbent cloth.

Cleaning Agents

- Detergent Solution: Mix $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of a colorless mild detergent in 1 cup of water.
- Ammonia Solution: Mix 1 tablespoon of clear household ammonia in $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of water.
- Vinegar Solution: Mix $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of white household vinegar in $\frac{2}{3}$ cup of water.
- Dry Cleaning Fluid: Apply isopropyl alcohol (standard rubbing alcohol) to a white cloth or towel and blot. Do not apply dry cleaning fluid directly to the carpet.

About Bleach

A bleach is a chemical that can remove color and stains mostly via an oxidative process. One of the most common types of bleaches is chlorine bleach which is typically a solution of about 6% sodium hypochlorite in water. Chlorine bleach is also used in a diluted form as a disinfectant. As a strong oxidizer, bleach attacks nylon and degrades it, independent on any effect on color, stains or whitening. The degradation of nylon by bleach results in a dramatic reduction in physical strength and resilience causing the nylon yarn to break easily. Also, once applied, bleach is very difficult to fully remove even with thorough rinsing. Even trace levels of bleach will degrade nylon over time.

Stain Selection Chart

Spill or Stain	Detergent Solution	Ammonia Solution	Vinegar Solution	Water Rinse	Dry Cleaning Fluid
Blood	1	2		3	
Chewing Gum					1
Chocolate	1	2		3	
Coffee	1	2		3	
Crayon					1
Nail Polish					1
Ice Cream	1	2		3	
Ink (Ballpoint)					1
Lipstick		1		3	
Mustard	1		2	3	
Paint (Oil-Based)					1
Paint (Water-Based)	1	2		3	
Soft Drinks	1	2		3	
Tomato Sauce	1	2		3	
Urine	1		2	3	
Vomit	1	2		3	
Wine	1	2			

Deep Cleaning

Deep cleaning such as hot water extraction to remove heavy soiling from carpeting should only be carried out by a professional carpet cleaning company. Hot water extraction is the physical and chemical extraction of soil and stains by hot water and suitable detergents or cleaning agents. Wet extraction is sometimes called “steam cleaning”. However, the term “steam cleaning” is a misnomer as the steam condenses to hot water before it contacts the carpet. The recommended water temperature range is 110° to 130°F (43° to 54°C).

High traffic areas should typically be deep cleaned at least between 3 and 6 times annually. Low to medium traffic areas should be cleaned between 2 and 4 times annually. The actual number of deep cleanings needed per year will depend on the amount of soiling that takes place.

Some detergents and cleaning agents can permanently damage the carpet face yarn. Avoid cleaning products with pH levels over 9.5 and products of any kind that contain toxic or flammable solvents or chemicals. Do not use bleach. It is important to carry out a final rinse step with clean water to remove any residual cleaning product. Allow the carpet to completely dry to the touch before walking on it otherwise yarn damage and rapid re-soiling can occur. Thoroughly vacuum the dried carpet directly after deep cleaning. Only use cleaning products and equipment that have been certified through the Carpet and Rug Institute (CRI) Seal of Approval Program must be used. Information on certified cleaning products and equipment can be found on the CRI website at www.carpet-rug.org.