

How to look after your carpets – A Guide

A carpet can very quickly trap vast amounts of trodden – in dirt and grit from pavements containing all manner of unpleasant contaminants. It is also a store for invisible air borne pollutants such as human and animal dander, mould spores, pollen, engine fumes, dust mites and their faeces, bacteria, smoke, and other nasty chemicals.

The grit, if left in the carpet, will work its way to the bottom of the pile and slowly wear it away without anybody noticing until it is too late. The pollutants, if not removed from the carpet, will be a threat to the health and comfort of the occupants and visitors, and will begin to smell stale.

All these elements can be present even though the carpet may look clean. Preventative action is essential. There is a great deal that can be done to combat these problems without having to call in a professional cleaner too frequently.

Prevention is Better Than Cure

Outside the building

Because trodden in dirt starts its life outside, it does help enormously if one can brush and preferably wash down the approaches to entrance doors, and place a substantial scraper mat outside or within each doorway. The bigger the better. It needs to be shaken out daily. If dirt is allowed to build up in a mat, it will lose its ability to collect dirt.

Indoor Doormats

Trodden in wet muddy dirt is best dealt with by doormats at the inside of each entrance. You may already be using them, but what are they supposed to be doing? They should be trapping any wet dirt that escapes the outdoors mat. Synthetic mat materials such as polypropylene absorb very little moisture. I recommend the use of rubber backed cotton pile mats within each doorway. They are absorbent and thus collect wet dirt before it is trodden further into the building to rapidly soak into the carpets. It is important to wash these mats regularly.

Vacuum

Even if you manage to reduce trodden in dirt to zero, there are still all those invisible but undesirable bits of dry debris constantly floating down onto your carpet. As they get walked on so they get pushed further into the pile. That is why it is important to vacuum main walkways regularly and frequently before the particles “take root”, even when there is no visible dirt on the surface.

In order to loosen dirt the vacuum cleaner must have a revolving brush at the suction end. If there is a collection bag, empty it when it is more than half full. If there is a filter, clean it regularly. Both these actions will ensure efficient suction. Set the cleaner at the correct brush height. If you are thinking of buying a new vacuum cleaner I can give you details of good models. Please telephone me on 01395 272428.

Spillages and Stains

Don't leave a liquid stain to set. Soak up what you can with an absorbent colour fast towel, kitchen paper, or a spoon. Apply just a little Wool safe approved spray stain remover such as 1001 Troubleshooter, as per the instructions, and call me on 01395 272428

Tap or press it in with a small stiff brush or cloth (don't rub, and therefore fuzz!). Blot with towel or paper.

To dilute the stain apply a little water with a fine sprayer, and blot. If needed, repeat. Don't over wet as this might cause a browning stain to rise from the backing. Put layers of towels or paper over the spillage and place a heavy waterproof weight on top and leave for several hours. Use loads of tissues if needed – they are less expensive than a new carpet. Vacuum when dry.

Beware of furniture legs and other items staining a damp carpet, leaking plant pots, paint spots, cleaning fluids, bleaches, skin creams, candle wax, leaking radiators and chewing gum.

Professional Cleaning – How Often?

Experience has shown that if a carpet is properly used and maintained, then the following frequencies will keep it in top condition. It may not always be necessary to clean every square foot of every area on every occasion – a walkways only clean on every second or third session would in many cases be enough to maintain appearance and hygiene, thus reducing expense. Ideal frequencies are:-

- Areas regularly used by children or for eating Every 3 to 6 months
- Areas of other heavy use Every 6 to 12 months
- Areas of moderate use Every 12 to 24 months
- Areas of light use Every 24 to 48 months

More Ways To Avoid Ruining A Carpet

Direct sunlight can cause pronounced fading of furnishings. Draw curtains or blinds when necessary.

Holes, split seams, and ripples are a trip hazard, and should be put right before the carpet deteriorates beyond hope Odd pieces of carpet that sprout up from nowhere should be neatly snipped off – not pulled.

Don't leave any items on a damp carpet. They could cause stains and dye bleed.

A heavy object dragged across a Polypropylene pile carpet may leave a permanent heat distortion mark.

When choosing a new carpet avoid buying a pale coloured one for busy areas. Despite much care, it would probably look well past its best after a couple of months.

Greyish/black lines can appear around the perimeters of fitted carpets. These marks can also appear under doors, and as dots and blobs around radiator pipes and where little holes have been made by the spikes on a carpet fitter's knee kicker. They are called draught or filtration marks resulting from the passage of dust-laden air blowing into the room. Sometimes they can be partly, and occasionally completely, removed by a professional carpet cleaner. To avoid this problem, when having a new carpet laid, insist that any floorboards are first covered by an impervious material. For all fitted carpets, gaps between floors and skirting boards and around radiator pipes should be sealed.

Castor cups or gliders under some furniture will reduce the depth of unsightly dents.

Pets usually have their favourite places to sprawl out when they are tired. This slowly soils and flattens a carpet – often irreversibly.

Shoes and trainers with rubber soles can cause considerable wear, particularly where people turn when walking, and by chairs in frequent use . Strategic use of mats or rugs will protect the vulnerable areas. Better still, encourage the occupants to wear indoor only footwear.

Carpet tiles can sometimes rescue a situation. When an area becomes worn or badly stained, soiled tiles can be replaced by good ones from an out of sight area.