



IICRC
Institute of Inspection Cleaning
and Restoration Certification

Carpet Cleaning Maintenance Tips

As homeowners look to keep things around longer during an economic recession, IICRC offers five tips to help maintain carpet and keep it looking newer for longer – saving time and money.

- Keep the soil off of your carpet. The most economical way to keep your carpet clean is to keep it from getting dirty! Walk off mats are vastly underappreciated and rarely utilized properly by homeowners.

Walk off mats must be cleaned regularly to assure that they do not become a new source of soil contamination once they are loaded with soil. Spend a little more money and buy a mat designed for this purpose. Walk off mats are usually made from synthetic, non absorbent material and should be large enough for the individual entering the home to wipe both feet as they walk in. Such mats are available from local home improvement stores.

These types of mats should be used instead of a carpet scrap or other unsuitable material that cannot function nearly as well. A small area rug may be placed inside of the home as a second line of defense. Such rugs are more aesthetically pleasing, and will hold up to such use if there is a well maintained outside entry mat.

- Vacuum regularly. There is no step more important to preserving the appearance and long term usefulness of your carpet than regular vacuuming.

Gravity and repeated foot traffic cause abrasive soil particles to fall below the surface of the carpet pile where they will damage carpet fibers. Vacuum heavy traffic areas daily. Areas that are not heavily trafficked may be vacuumed two or three times a week.

Most any vacuum cleaner can make a carpet look good, but a good quality vacuum cleaner will remove the deeply impacted soil that you cannot see, but that is damaging your carpet. One place to check to see if the vacuum cleaner that you are interested in purchasing conforms to industry standards is the Carpet and Rug Institute. Go to www.carpet-rug.org for more information on vacuum cleaners that meet their rigid requirements.

- Remove spots before they become stains! Today's carpet resists spills better than ever. But even the best carpet isn't truly stain proof. To prevent permanent spills or costly professional stain removal services, act quickly when spills occur.

Most liquid spills can be removed completely with absorbent cloths or even simple paper towels. Remove any solid material in the spill by gently picking out the material, then scraping with light pressure. All liquids should be blotted with downward pressure, and never, ever

rubbed. Blotting is more time consuming, but this gentle action protects the carpet from texture damage, and actually prevents deep penetration of the spill. Most spots come out completely without the need of specialty spotters, so only use a spotting product if the above method fails. Only use products designed for use in carpet spotting and cleaning. Avoid products that are designed for hard surfaces, such as those that contain bleaches or harsh chemicals. Such products may damage the carpet fiber, and often cause color loss.

When in doubt, consult the website of the carpet manufacturer, or call a trained, certified carpet cleaner in your area. Such cleaners are usually willing to help you with your own spotting efforts as a gesture of good will.

- It's OK to clean it yourself if you can. Professional carpet cleaners will always be able to remove more soil and stains that you can yourself. However, if budget or circumstances demand that you try to clean your own carpet, remember these important rules:
 - a. Use Products Made for Carpet: Purchase products designed for the machine that you purchased or rented. If your carpet does not clean up with these products, call a professional carpet cleaner. As with spotting, the use of harsh chemicals that are not designed for carpet may cause color loss, excessive resoiling, and may void carpet stain resistance warranties. Consult with the carpet manufacturer for product recommendations if you are uncertain as to what to use.
 - b. Don't Use Too Much Detergent: Even if the cleaning detergent that you purchase is designed for use on carpet, using too much product will leave a residue that will cause your carpet to become soiled very quickly. Use only what the product manufacturer recommends. Although more time consuming, it is often better to spray such detergents on the carpet first, then to rinse the carpet with clear water.
 - c. Don't Get the Carpet Too Wet: After each extraction pass, make additional dry passes where no cleaning solution is being applied. As with your cleaning product choice and use, more water is not better. If you apply more cleaning solution than you can recover, mold and bacterial growth may occur, along with related unpleasant odors
- Call a professional. Why spend the money to call a cleaning professional? Professional carpet cleaners who are trained and certified have the know how to remove spots and stains that would otherwise be permanent. Such individuals also have invested in equipment that is more powerful and that can remove soil that rental or consumer purchased machines cannot.

Here are some criteria to help you to choose a reliable carpet cleaner in your area:

- a. Knowledge: The cleaning company's representatives should be able to answer your questions about cleaning, spotting, and other carpet cleaning related questions. The firm should be able to provide proof that the technician(s) who come into your home have been trained in the tasks for which you are hiring them. If the firm has been certified by IICRC, you will be able to find them listed at www.iicrc.org.

- b. Reputation in the Community: The cleaning company should be able to provide you with several references that you may contact so that you may ask what type of service this company provides.
- c. Pricing Policies: Whether you receive the cleaning price on the phone or from an in home estimate, you should expect a firm, written estimate without hidden charges or excessive pressure to purchase extra products or services once work has commenced.

As previously mentioned, a good professional cleaner will be able to remove soils and spills that frustrate your best efforts. Sometimes the most economical choice is to avoid hours of wasted effort and dollars spent on home cleaning agents and leave the job to a professional. And, if you haven't already found out, carpet cleaning can be hard work.