

# CARPET & INTERIOR TEXTILES

*Care Guide*





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Care Guide

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## RESOURCES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SurpHaces is a professional resource and support organization for quality surface PROS and their customers. At SurpHaces, you can find expert answers, solutions, and service providers for stone, tile, terrazzo, wood, carpet and interior textiles, polished concrete, metal, VCT, and more. The PROS in this network consist of skilled specialists in a variety of disciplines including specification, installation, repair, restoration, and maintenance. Each one is concerned with the art and science of surfaces—that is, they

provide solutions that take into account both the beauty of surfaces and other important considerations, such as surface functionality, safety, preservation, and sustainability.

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### Acknowledgements

**THANK YOU** to the network of SurpHaces PRO Partners who contributed so much to the development of this guide, and to the others who played such an important role and shared our vision to deliver reliable stone and tile information to the public.

**SPECIAL THANKS** to Maurizio Bertoli, Fred Hueston and John Freitag, each icons in the industry and among the most highly regarded and sought-after subject matter experts, who each contributed so generously to the wealth of information that you will find in these pages.



Dear Reader,

Your carpet and interior textiles play a foundational role in your decor and we want to help you maximize their life and keep them looking their best.

We are all about professional cleaning for your carpet and interior textiles, but just as importantly, we want to make sure our customers are armed with good, sound care information—which is why we are so pleased to present this *Carpet and Interior Textiles Care Guide*. Feel free to pass it around liberally.

Give us a call or visit our website to learn more about our services. If you have carpets, fine rugs, upholstery or other interior textiles in need of cleaning, please do consider using us. You won't be disappointed.

Our sincerest regards,



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## CARPET & INTERIOR TEXTILES CARE

Carpet can add warmth and color to your home or office, but did you know that it can also result in fewer airborne allergens?<sup>1</sup> Of course, this means that your carpeting — which acts as a giant filter catching and holding dander, bacteria and other pollutants — will require regular and thorough cleaning to keep it looking its best and maintain the healthy atmosphere of your surroundings. With proper maintenance, a quality carpet can last for ten or more years, depending on its location. Not only is this positive for the environment — preventing carpet from prematurely winding up in landfills — it's positive for your pocketbook, helping you avoid costly replacement for as long as possible.

Your upholstered furniture, draperies and other interior textiles are a functional and beautiful way to bring your unique character to your environment. Consequently, you want them to retain their best appearance and usefulness for as long as possible.

*This guide is intended to provide you with routine maintenance tips and guidelines and emergency troubleshooting solutions.*

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<sup>1</sup> In a recent study it was shown that carpet trapped allergens to a greater extent than hard surface floors, resulting in fewer particles escaping into the air. Allergens trapped by carpet did not return to the carpet's surface or the air, even when the carpet was disturbed by walking or other similar activities. Furthermore, effective carpet cleaning - such as vacuuming with a high efficiency filter and hot water extraction reduced both surface allergens and airborne particle counts, maintaining indoor air quality. This independent series of studies was commissioned by Shaw Industries, the world's largest carpet manufacturer and a leading flooring provider, and conducted by Airmid Healthgroup limited, a leading biomedical research organization that conducts health-based research. The data were presented at the 2012 annual meetings of the American Academy of Asthma, Allergy, and Immunology (AAAAI) and the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI).

## Equipment Check

Always make certain that your vacuum cleaner is in great shape. The beauty and longevity of your interior textiles depends on it! The purpose of a vacuum is to suck up grit, dirt and other contaminants which would otherwise mar the beautiful appearance of your home or office, create poor health conditions, and cause your carpets, upholstery and other interior textiles to deteriorate more quickly. Grit and dirt left in carpets and furniture acts like sandpaper, eroding and eventually severing the fibers. You need a vacuum that efficiently removes these damaging particles.

This is not a matter of your vacuum's brand—though that can play a part—it is more a matter of your vacuum's condition. The better your vacuum is maintained, the longer your interior textiles will remain in good condition.

Here are some important tips for maintaining the health and efficiency of your vacuum:

### **DO NOT OVERFILL OR EMPTY AND REUSE YOUR VACUUM BAGS**

These bags are designed to trap contaminants without impeding airflow. The pores of an overly full or reused bag become clogged and no longer allow for air flow. This can reduce the cleaning efficiency of your vacuum by 50% or more. Emptying the bag when it is half full will help maintain your vacuum's efficiency. Keeping plenty of spare bags on hand can help you avoid the temptation to leave the same bag in past its point of maximum usefulness.

### **DON'T BE CHEAP!**

Remember that “you get what you pay for.” Using poor quality “bargain” bags may ultimately cost you more in vacuum repair and carpet replacement than you ever actually save. Why? Because poor quality bags will impede your vacuum's effectiveness and allow particles to escape the bag into the interior of your vacuum or back to the floor. This not only defeats the purpose of vacuuming in the first place, but can also damage the motor and parts of your vacuum, resulting in additional repair or replacement costs you might have avoided by using better quality bags.

### **CHANGE YOUR VACUUM BELT EVERY THREE MONTHS**

The vacuum belt is what turns your vacuum brush, loosening dirt and raising matted down fibers. As the belt becomes worn, it stretches, causing the brush to turn more slowly and with less force. This may not be immediately obvious because the vacuum may still pick up the most obvious surface litter, so replacing belts at regular intervals will help keep your vacuum at its best. It is a quick thing to change, but you may want a professional to do it for you, since the correct amount of tension in the new belt is vital—too tight and it can strain your vacuum's motor and bearings, too loose and you will have the same problem as you have with a worn out belt.

### **HAVE YOUR VACUUM PROFESSIONALLY SERVICED EVERY TEN TO TWELVE MONTHS**

No matter how efficient your vacuum, not all of the grit and dirt your vacuum picks up makes it into the bag. Some of it will accumulate in the housings and bearings, eventually clogging things up. This can result in a short-circuited or overheated motor which will, at some point, burn out. This may also create a fire hazard.

Over time, your vacuum's attachments will also wear out, becoming inefficient, eventually wearing to the point where they no longer do their job effectively. Obviously, this greatly impedes your vacuum's ability to clean and will ultimately shorten the life of both the vacuum and your interior textiles.

**Important Note:** Be sure to refer to the manufacturer's instructions regarding the type of vacuum attachment that should be used with your carpet or upholstery. Using the wrong attachment can actually result in **damage** to your interior textiles.



## LET'S TALK ABOUT STAINS

A true stain is a permanent alteration of the color of the carpet. This kind of discoloration is most commonly caused by acid-based dyes, which can be found in many foods, drinks and household products. Acid dyes are used in the initial dyeing process of many nylon carpets and there are routinely dye sites in the original raw carpet fibers left open after dyeing — the lighter the carpet, the more dye sites are left open. These open dye sites are ready and waiting to form a chemical bond with any other acid dye that happens to come along, unless the carpet has been specifically treated to prevent it. Bleaching can also result in a permanent discoloration.

Put most simply, a stain is a permanent discoloration. The fact is, however, that not all discolorations are permanent. Textile cleaning professionals generally refer to these non-permanent discolorations as “spots.” Spots can be caused by spills or collected grit and dirt which mask or dull the carpet’s color, rather than actually altering it. With this kind of discoloration, once appropriately cleaned the carpet may return to its normal color. It is important to treat spots as quickly as possible, so they do not become stains.



### Five Reasons You Should Consider Protective Treatments:

1. Your carpet and upholstery will look better and last longer when protected. Soils will release from the fibers much more effectively.
2. Protective treatments make spots easier to remove. The easier a spot is to remove, the less detergent and/or agitation you will have to use. The less agitation you have to use, the less time it will take. When a protective treatment has been applied, many spots can be removed easily with just water.
3. Protective treatments can help save your traffic areas from becoming destroyed. Traffic area soil is very abrasive and cuts carpet yarns like a knife. This damaging soil releases more readily from protected fibers.
4. Protective treatments can make your next professional cleaning more effective. Having protector applied will enhance your next professional cleaning by allowing more soil to be removed.
5. Protective treatment can help prevent permanent stains. Beautiful textiles can be ruined by an ugly stain. Protector will allow you to remove spots and spills more effectively, thereby helping you to avoid permanent staining.



*It is important to ask about the detergents and products used for cleaning. Certain detergents used by companies even today are not safe for children, pets, and people with allergies.*

## CARPETS & RUGS

### SOME TIPS FOR PROLONGING THE LIFE OF YOUR CARPET

**Make your house a “No Shoe Zone.”** Place a shoe rack close to the most frequently used door (or doors) and encourage your household and guests to remove their shoes upon entering. This will greatly reduce the amount of dirt and mud tracked throughout the house and keeps your carpets looking better longer.

**Further reduce tracked in dirt by utilizing entry mats.** These mats should be cleaned and shaken frequently, since the dirt trapped by them can damage the flooring underneath if allowed to accumulate. This is particularly true if your entry floor is hardwood or a softer natural stone which scratches easily.

**Spot-clean spills and other accidents as quickly as possible,** using paper towels or cloths that are white in order to avoid accidental dye transfer. Unless you are familiar with the chemistry involved and understand which detergents work best with the particular spill or spot you are dealing with, it is recommended that you use only water to do this spot cleaning. Some detergents which are great on one particular type of spot could actually permanently set another. This is not a risk you want to take. A qualified cleaning professional should have a thorough understanding of these interactions and

will be able to select the best option for removing any particular spot.

**Rearrange furniture at least twice a year** to alter traffic patterns and reduce uneven wear.

**Vacuum at least once a week,** focusing on high traffic areas, such as entries and around furniture. For best results, don't rush — vacuum slowly and evenly.

**For oriental rugs** be sure not to vacuum fringe with your beater bar. Use the end of a vacuum hose from a canister vacuum. A quality pad used under your rug helps protect it from dirt, wear and slippage.

*In addition to frequent vacuuming, its important to have your carpets and rugs professionally cleaned on a regular basis to remove the oily, sticky soils that even the best vacuums can't take out.*





## DO'S & DON'TS — CARPET & RUGS

Wherever food and drink is consumed, or pets are housed there are bound to be spills and accidents. Likewise, mud and dirt will get tracked in from the outdoors, at least in high traffic areas. These scenarios can result in unappealing marks on carpet or upholstery, which are sometimes difficult to remove. Therefore:

### DO

- Do use furniture glides under heavy pieces and rearrange furniture periodically to avoid permanent indentations.
- Do use small area rugs to protect heavy traffic areas
- Do pick up any spills as quickly as possible.
- Do vacuum regularly and have professional deep cleaning done at the intervals recommended by the manufacturer's warranty, whether it **looks** like you need it or not.
- Do vacuum the back, as well as the front, of rugs which are not permanently fixed in place, since this can allow for better removal of soiling particles which have penetrated deep into the fibers or the rug's backing.
- Do test an inconspicuous area before applying any DIY stain remover to your carpet—you want to remove the stain not the carpet's coloring.

### DON'T

- Don't rub or scrub a spill—only blot it. Rubbing can spread the spill, drive it deeper into the carpet's fibers, or even damage the fibers.
- Don't use colored cloths or towels to blot up a spill, since their color may stain the area you are attempting to clean.
- Don't do-it-yourself for anything other than regular vacuuming and emergency rescue treatment to clean up spills.



## CARPET CLEANING FREQUENCY RECOMMENDATIONS

How often should you have your carpets professionally cleaned? This table provides recommended guidelines.

Environment	Normal	Special Condition	Cleaning Frequency
Daycare	1 wk	Epidemic	Daily
Nursing Homes	1 mo	High Humidity	1 wk
Restaurants	1 mo	Dusty Conditions	1 wk
Schools	3 - 6 mo	Dusty Outside	1 - 2 mo
Family Residence	6 - 12 mo	Children and Pets	3 - 6 mo
Office Building	6 - 12 mo	Ground Floor	3 - 6 mo

\*The above carpet cleaning frequency table is a time-tested public-health recommendation by Michael A. Berry, PhD, and not the U.S. EPA as improperly indicated on some carpet cleaning websites. At the request of concerned citizens, Mr. Berry recommended this frequency table in 1989, at which time he was the director of the U.S. EPA's Indoor Air Research Program. The table was based upon empirical evidence, literature review, as well as the his personal observations and opinion as a public health professional and educator. At no time was the table ever presented as an official U.S. EPA position on carpet cleaning frequency. Since 1989, this table has been presented in numerous publications including *Protecting the Built Environment — Cleaning for Health* (1994) and the ANSI/IICRC S100 Standard & Reference Guide for Professional Cleaning of Textile Floor Coverings.



## ESSENTIAL CARPET CARE

Carpeting can be wonderfully luxurious and desirable as a floor covering, but it is not without its challenges. From basic to “call a professional,” here are some of the challenges you are most likely to encounter and what you can do about them.

### NEW CARPETING ISSUES

There are unique issues you may face when you have new carpeting installed. The most common are odors, and fluffing and shedding.

#### Odors

During and after your carpet installation, you may notice an odor. The cause may be the removal of the old carpet and padding or the padding, adhesives, or seaming tape of the new carpet. This odor will dissipate over time. It is recommended that you help the process along by opening doors and windows and turning the HVAC system on full for 48 to 72 hours. Other odors can be addressed with the deodorizing products utilized by professionals.

#### Fluffing and Shedding

It is not unusual to find fluff and loose fibers on new carpet. They are the normal result of fibers left over from the manufacturing process and, with regular vacuuming, should disappear within a year after installation.

### IMPORTANT BASICS

Some challenges, like loose fibers (below) are a quick and easy fix. Others, like spots, dirt and grime can happen over and over again. Whatever the issue, if you don't know how to deal with it correctly, you run the risk of actually making the problem worse.

#### Loose Fibers/Sprouting

You may occasionally find a single fiber sticking up above the rest. **DO NOT PULL IT OUT!** Simply trim it to match the height of the surrounding fibers. If this persists in a localized area, you should contact the manufacturer's representative or your contractor.

#### Removing A Basic Spot

When a spill occurs, scoop up any semi-solid debris with a spoon and cover and press the area with a clean kitchen towel, paper towel or sponge to lift the spill away from the carpet fibers. Blotting is recommended because scrubbing not only spreads the stain, but causes it to become ingrained into the carpet fibers. When the towel or sponge becomes saturated, exchange it with dry materials and add weight to enhance absorption and replace as needed.





Apply a mild detergent solution. Rather than applying the detergent directly to the carpet, apply it to the white or light colored towel you will be blotting with. To determine whether the detergent will discolor your carpet, it is recommended that you test a small, inconspicuous area by exerting pressure or weight for one minute. The spot may require more than one treatment if it is particularly tenacious and some severe stains cannot be removed completely.

After the carpet is clean and dry, brush it gently to recover the carpet pile.

### **Dirt & Grime/Soiling**

It is impossible to prevent dust and dirt from settling on or being tracked across your carpet. Over time, this will result in a dulling of your carpet's appearance and can aggravate allergies (see citation on page 5). Regular and thorough vacuuming, complemented by periodic professional cleaning can keep this to a minimum.



### **Spills vs. Stains**

Staining is one of the most frequent problems with carpets and it is important to remember that, while the majority of carpeting today is stain-resistant, this is not the same as stain-proof. When there is a spill, it is imperative that the carpet is cleaned promptly, preferably before the spill has the opportunity to dry and become ingrained into the carpet. Using a sponge and water can help to diminish the spot, but be careful not to spread it instead.

Stains are spills or spots which have become permanent, so prevention and quick clean-up are your best options. Remember that detergents which effectively remove one type of spot may permanently set another. Unless you are familiar with the chemistry involved, you may want to stick with plain water for immediate clean up and the services of a professional for any additional resolution needed.

## **TOUGHER CHALLENGES**

Here are some of the more challenging issues you may encounter and the steps you can take to address them.

### **Removing Candle Wax From Carpeting**

Wax stains from candle overflow can be messy and challenging to deal with, especially on carpet and textiles.

Removing wax from fabric surfaces such as carpet, tablecloths and upholstery requires an iron, paper towels, dry-cleaning solvent and a detergent for delicate fabrics.

The first step is to cover the wax stain with a paper towel. Next, use an iron to re-melt the wax so that it is absorbed into the paper towel, taking care to press lightly and avoid burning the carpet by keeping the iron on for a long duration.





If wax residue remains after you have used the paper towel and iron to lift it several times, apply a bit of home dry-cleaning liquid to a damp cloth or sponge and blot, but use the minimum amount of dry-cleaning solvent required to avoid damaging the carpet backing.

Another option is to mix mild, bleach-free, alkali-free detergent and warm water and blot the area with a rag or sponge.

### Addressing Red Wine Spills or Stains

First step: blot, blot, blot: If it is a new spill, use a white cloth or paper towels to blot as much of the red wine spill as you can. Follow this with pouring a bit of cold water directly onto the wine stain. Doing this helps dilute what remains of the stain. Continue with blotting until no more of the stain is coming out.

#### *The Dish Soap and White Wine Vinegar Solution Method*

If diluting and blotting just isn't doing the trick, try this method, which is not only great for red wine, but also a host of other tough stains.

Pour two cups of warm water into a bowl. Add a tablespoon of white vinegar and another tablespoon of dishwashing liquid.

Dip a sponge into the bowl and wring out well, then begin blotting the wine spill with the sponge. You should see immediate lifting of the stain, but continue blotting until the stain has lifted completely.

Follow with blotting the area with clear water, then blotting dry with a clean white towel or paper towels.

**IMPORTANT!** Don't forget to test: Of course, your stains don't always cooperate by appearing in inconspicuous areas, but do keep in mind that it is always recommended that you first test any cleaning solution on a portion of carpet or upholstery that is out of the way.

### Removing Nail Polish

Your first consideration is the color of your carpet. Using non-acetone polish remover is generally your best bet if your carpet is white or light colored. Try hair spray or rubbing alcohol with darker colors where there is a possibility of dye interaction with your cleaning agent. It never hurts to test on an inconspicuous spot first. Apply your non-acetone polish remover, hair spray or rubbing alcohol and then blot the polish with a sponge or paper towels (use white paper towels to avoid any color bleed). Keep blotting until there is no more polish coming up. Don't get discouraged if this takes a while and don't give up. You don't want to leave any polish behind.

### PROBLEMS THAT OCCUR WITH TIME

Pet accidents and wine or other kinds of spills are easily (and often immediately) noticeable, but some carpet challenges develop gradually and over time. You may not even realize they're happening until they get pretty extreme. This category of





issues includes, but is not limited to the four that follow.

### **Filtration Soiling**

Filtration soiling is when darker strips of dirt accumulate in front of doors, along baseboards and stairs, or anywhere where there is an air draft, including from underneath. Filtration soiling occurs gradually over time. It can be prevented by properly filtered heating/cooling systems, and appropriate sealing of doors, baseboards, carpet edges and so on.

### **Fading/Color Loss**

Fading and color loss can happen for a variety of reasons — direct sunlight, heating system emissions, and exposure to chemicals such as pesticides, household cleaners and so on. One of the most common causes of fading or color loss is the use of store-bought stain remover. Unfortunately, the only solutions for this are replacement or re-dyeing. Although curtains and shades can prevent carpet fading, these solutions have the disadvantage of blocking natural light. Shade from trees and awnings can prevent fading to a certain extent, but window film tints that filter UV rays, decrease glare, and refract heat are the best option.

Window film tint can be purchased at home improvement centers. It is thin and transparent and is easily applied to the inside of windows using a water and soap solution (provided with the instructions). The best films filter both heat and UV rays, but caution should be taken when choosing darker films that will greatly reduce natural light.

### **Traffic Area Wear — Crushing & Matting**

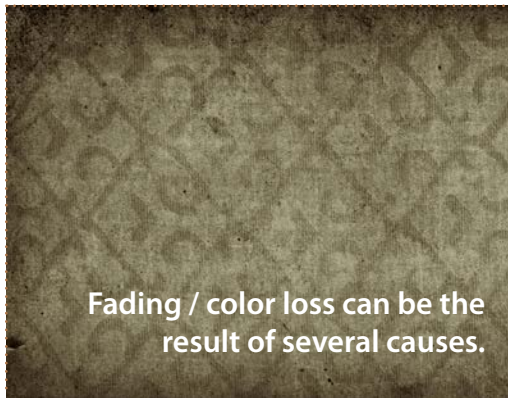
Traffic area wear is exactly what it sounds like—the compression and deterioration of carpet quality in the areas most commonly travelled. For example, areas in front of chairs or sofas, and the direct paths between rooms. Crushing and matting both result from heavy foot traffic. Crushing can be mitigated to a certain degree by regular vacuuming. The primary difference between crushing and matting is that matting is when the yarn of the carpet unravels and mingles between strands. This can be caused by an improperly specified cushion, the failure of the cushion, or a lack of proper maintenance. The strategic placement of area rugs, combined with regular cleaning can help prevent these problems.

### **Carpet Indentations**

These can be caused by the weight of heavy furniture. Some of these indentations may be permanent. You can help avoid this problem by using furniture gliders and by regularly rearranging your furniture.

There are two commonly recommended methods for fixing dented carpet.

First, the ice cube method. How many ice cubes you need depends on the size of the divot. Place the cubes about two inches apart when using more than one. Allow the cubes to melt and the carpet to dry, then vacuum over the area. Vacuuming



Fading / color loss can be the result of several causes.



Great way to remove carpet indentations!

should lift the fibers back into place. If any remain down, they can be worked into place using your fingertips, a coin or the side of a spoon or fork, **BUT** this must be done gently to avoid damaging the fibers. **Caution:** Be careful if you have wood floors under the carpet because moisture can damage them. Test in an out of the way area first and take care not to over-saturate the rug.

Avoid using this method with antique carpets, valuable, hand-dyed or delicate rugs or on materials that are not compatible with water cleaning.

The second solution requires the opposite approach. You can use a coin, spoon, fork or your fingertips to GENTLY work the carpet pile back upright, and then warm the carpet fibers by steaming the area with an iron held at least 4 inches above the surface. Take care not to touch the iron directly to the carpet's fibers.

### BEST LEFT TO THE PROFESSIONALS

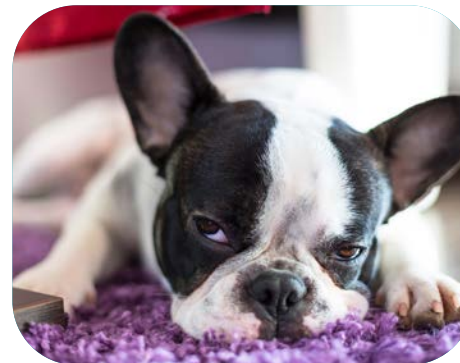
Many of us prefer to resolve problems on our own, but sometimes we just have to admit that the best way to resolve certain problems is to call a professional to do it for us. And don't forget that fixing certain issues yourself may void your carpet's warranty. Here are a few challenges that most people lack either the expertise, the necessary equipment, or both to address on their own.

### Removing Pet Odors

It is important to note that pet urine, one of the most common causes of both stains and odor issues, can be quite difficult to remove. This is because the urine soaks through to the carpet backing and crystallizes there. It can last there for many years. In humid conditions, these crystals dissolve and the odor comes back. The only real way to eliminate urine odor is to thoroughly clean the front and back of the carpet and replace the affected pad. This is not a DIY project! A professional carpet cleaning company will have the training, tools and experience to resolve your pet odor problems. Remember, it is also possible that the odor is coming from the substrate or under the floor. In this case, cleaning the carpet and pad will not eliminate the problem. It may be necessary to sand, clean and seal the sub-floor or, in some cases, even replace the affected area of flooring completely.



Declaring the majority of your house a “no shoe zone” is one way to extend your carpet’s life and keep it looking like new!



Blacklight image showing hidden pet spots.

Trying to fix carpet snags yourself may only worsen the problem.



Removing odors from a pet still residing in the home is more challenging because most animals will repeatedly use the same area, so it is impractical to completely eliminate all odors.

#### **Carpet Snags**

This is also best left to a professional. Attempting to fix these yourself may worsen the problem or invalidate the carpet's warranty (if applicable).

#### **Split Seams or Tears in Carpeting**

If your wall-to-wall carpeting is not properly installed, you may find that the seams between sections of carpet will start coming apart (a problem that occurs when the seams are not glued down properly or the seam is located in a high-traffic area). It's a good idea to address this problem as quickly as possible so that the edges do not fray.

It is best to contact a professional carpet installer to correct this problem, because the tension of the carpet may need to be released—a job that requires a few special carpet installation tools plus experience in working with carpeting.

#### **Ripples, Waves & Buckles**

These issues are the result of poor installation, excessive humidity or drastic change in temperature. They can generally be corrected by a qualified installer using a power stretcher.

#### **Pest Infestation (Fleas, Beetles & Moths)**

Fortunately most wool and wool-blend carpets are treated to prevent moth damage and synthetic carpets are generally unappealing to beetles or other insects because they are not good food. The most common pest problem with carpet is fleas. Flea outbreaks can be mitigated by vacuuming regularly and being sure to replace and remove the vacuum bag afterwards. Fleas won't damage the carpet and will die there unless they find an animal to sustain them. Consult a pest control specialist for help with beetles or other insects.





## UPHOLSTERY

### SOME TIPS FOR PROLONGING THE LIFE OF YOUR UPHOLSTERY

**Minimize direct sunlight exposure.** UV light can cause fading and, eventually, deterioration of your upholstery. You can prolong upholstery's lovely appearance by taking precautions such as, not placing an upholstered piece where it will be exposed to direct sunlight, keeping shades drawn when the room is not in use, or having protective film applied to windows.

**Avoid potential discoloration.** When covering furniture, use white or light-colored fabric to avoid dye transfer from the covering to the upholstery. Also, be mindful of what you set on your upholstery—printed materials, such as newspapers, magazines or packaging may also transfer dye to your upholstery. We don't need to tell you not to sit on the furniture in muddy or paint-splattered clothing, right?

**Try to match usage and durability.** When purchasing an upholstered piece, consider where you intend to place it and what kind of existence it is likely to have. Is it going in a formal sitting room where it will see little day-to-day usage or in the rec room where the kids and sports fans are likely to eat, drink, horse around and/or jump on it? You won't want something particularly delicate for the rec room—that's just asking for trouble!

**Use High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) Filtration Bags** If your vacuum requires bags, using HEPA bags rather than the cheapest generic bag you can find can help prevent fine dust particles and allergens from escaping back into the air as you go.

**Remove pet hair.** And not just because it looks better or keeps your pet-allergic friends healthier and happier when they visit. Your dog or cat's fur may seem soft and fluffy, but left on the furniture it can be just as abrasive as dust and grime.

### FOR LEATHER

Take care of your leather and it will last a lifetime. Assuming normal wear and tear, leather should be conditioned and cleaned every six to twelve months.

**For spills and spots,** wipe or blot excess liquid immediately with an absorbent cloth and allow to air dry. Do not use soap or a lot of water, as this may cause more damage.

**Small scratches are not a big deal** when dealing with leather upholstery. The scratch should be gently rubbed with your fingertip until it is gone. Only use a damp cloth (distilled water only) if absolutely necessary.





## DO'S & DON'TS — UPHOLSTERY CARE

While most modern carpeting is widely composed of synthetic fibers, upholstery can be made of either synthetic or natural fibers or a combination of both. Not to mention the fact that you are several times more likely to find antique furniture which predates synthetics than you are to encounter antique carpets. This not only makes DIY care more tricky, it can also make selecting a protective treatment more complicated. For example, water-based protection treatments can work well on synthetic fibers, but not so well on natural ones. Manufacturers have begun to utilize standardized codes to indicate the recommended cleaning method, but these codes generally only indicate the color-fastness of the material, not other important considerations such as its susceptibility to shrinkage or discoloration. In addition, the codes may only be located on sample swatches of the upholstery and not on the piece of furniture itself, and so may not be available to guide you.

### DO

- Do educate yourself about the nature and composition of your pieces and the recommended cleaning and/or protection methods and products.
- Do vacuum your upholstery regularly.
- Do rotate your cushions regularly to distribute wear and avoid permanent indentations.
- Do clean up any spills as quickly as possible.
- Do have professional deep cleaning done at the intervals recommended according to the materials involved.

### DON'T

- Don't over-wet your upholstery. This can not only cause staining or discoloration, it can encourage the growth of mold and mildew.
- Don't use any protection treatment or stain remover without first testing it in an inconspicuous area.
- Don't use colored cloths or towels to blot up a spill, since their color may stain the area you are attempting to clean.
- Don't do-it-yourself for anything other than regular vacuuming and emergency rescue treatment to clean up spills.



## COMMON UPHOLSTERY PROBLEMS

The structure of your furniture can be trickier to navigate than a flat carpeted floor. In addition, upholstery can be comprised of synthetic or natural fibers or a combination of both, many of which may be more delicate than those you would find in your carpet. Consequently, keeping your upholstery in top condition requires knowledgeable understanding of the materials involved, and close attention to detail. Whether you choose to maintain your upholstery yourself, leave it to the professionals, or some combination of both, these are some of the common problems you should be aware of:

### Dirt & Grime/Soiling

While people generally do not walk on their furniture as they would their carpets, upholstery nevertheless accumulates dust and dirt over time from airborne contaminants, pets, and transfer from people's clothing. Regular vacuuming and periodic deep cleaning are vitally important to keeping your upholstery in top condition.

### Stains

Spills and stains happen, it is simply a fact of life, but how you address them can make the difference between a momentary inconvenience and permanent damage. Immediate cleanup is one way to mitigate or prevent staining, but with upholstery it is particularly important to know how a given cleaning agent is likely to effect the fibers and dyes present. It is also important to blot, rather than scrub or wipe as scrubbing can force the spill further into the fibers and wiping may inadvertently spread the stain.

### Water Marks

These marks, also known as water rings or water stains, are discolored rings around the area which was cleaned. They are caused by a variety of things: cellulose browning, the migration of dirt to the edges of the cleaning area upon drying, unstable dyes, or dissolved sizing. In spite of the name, "water marks" can also be caused by dry cleaning solutions or other strong solvents. In many cases, removing these marks can be difficult, if not impossible.



### Texture Changes

Delicate materials such as velvet and rayon, among others may be stretched and distorted, or have their "hand" (their feel when touched) altered when incorrectly or too aggressively cleaned.



## Color Bleeding

With the advent of more advanced dye stabilizing agents and low-wetting equipment, color bleeding is much rarer than it used to be. Color bleeding is most likely to occur with DIY spot treatments that are overly aggressive or cleaning efforts where over wetting is used. Certain household contaminants can create a potential color bleeding issue that may not manifest until the upholstery is cleaned. This happens when the chemicals deposited react with the water as a catalyst.

## Fading/Color Loss

Many spot treatments contain strong solvents or alkaline builders which can cause color loss in both natural and synthetic fibers. While true of both carpet and upholstery, the effect is often more noticeable on upholstery, particularly when only a small area has been treated. A professional carpet cleaning service is trained to know which products are safe to use.

## Browning

Browning can occur when natural fibers are treated with inappropriate spotting agents or if the fabric is excessively dampened and/or dries too slowly. You may also experience browning with nylon fibers if spotting agents are too high alkaline and drying occurs too slowly. This is something that can often be easily resolved by a professional.

## Shrinkage

This is more often a problem with natural materials such as cotton, wool, linen and silk (though rayon is one example of an engineered material which may also shrink).

## Odors

Odors can be addressed by a variety of products. However, these can also cause any of the difficulties noted above and their effectiveness will depend on the nature of the odor. It is probably best to at least consult a professional on the type of product required based on the specifics of both the odor's source (if known) and the materials involved.



## DRAPERIES & CURTAINS

### TIPS FOR PROLONGING THE LIFE OF YOUR DRAPERIES & CURTAINS

**Shake things up.** When closing drapery panels or lined draperies each night, give them a gentle shake to help keep dust and dirt from lodging in the fibers.

**Rotate your draperies and curtains.** When possible, regularly rotate draperies and curtains in high sun-exposure areas to more shady ones to help delay sun damage longer.

**Vacuum about once a month.** Use a handheld vacuum and soft brush attachment (or the attachment specified by the manufacturer if you have this information) to vacuum your draperies and curtains. If your vacuum has a “low” setting use it.

**Secure embellishments.** Before vacuuming, make certain that any trim, buttons or other embellishments are firmly attached and not likely to be pulled off or torn by the vacuum.

**Select for quality.** Choose quality fabrics rather than the least expensive option. You haven’t really saved any money if those inexpensive drapes fall apart quickly or become damaged or stained more easily than the higher quality, more expensive ones you actually liked better anyway.

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*For west- or south-facing windows—particularly in warmer climates—consider having the glass professionally treated to minimize the damage of ultra-violet (UV) rays. Unfortunately, it is a common misconception that any old window glass protects against UV damage.*

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## DO'S & DON'TS — DRAPERIES & CURTAINS

Though the terms “draperies” and “curtains” are often used interchangeably, there is actually a technical difference. Draperies tend to be floor length, lined, and of heavier fabrics. Curtains may be shorter, unlined, and of light weight fabrics, including lace and sheers. All of these window treatments should be properly cared for and cleaned on a regular basis.

### DO

- Do use only a mild detergent (like Woolite), cold water and the gentle cycle or your hands if your window treatments are specifically labeled as washable, unless the label provides different instructions, in which case...
- Do follow the manufacturers instructions for cleaning and care.
- Do vacuum regularly with a soft brush and low setting, and have professional deep cleaning done at the intervals recommended by the manufacturer’s warranty.
- Do ensure all embellishments are securely attached before vacuuming.
- Do rinse washable window treatments gently and thoroughly.
- Do consider blinds, UV resistant window treatments, linings and regular rotation between sunny and shady locations to better protect window treatments from sun damage.
- Do shake window treatments gently when closing each night to help prevent dust and pollutants from lodging in the fibers.
- Do iron window treatments on the wrong side (facing the window) (if they are labeled as ok to iron at all).

### DON'T

- Don’t wash window treatments unless they are specifically labeled as washable. If the tag is missing or says “Dry Clean Only” then you should **only** have the window treatment professionally cleaned.
- Don’t overload the washer when laundering your washable window treatments. Don’t wash lined draperies if the drapery and the lining are of different materials— one may shrink more than the other. If this happens, the drapery may pucker and no longer hang correctly.
- Don’t wash pleated draperies—they may not hold their shape.
- Don’t wash window treatments that have been weakened or damaged by sunlight.
- Don’t rehang curtains or draperies on metal hooks before they are completely dry. Hanging them while still damp may cause the hooks to rust and stain the fabric.



## Some Tips for Lace and Sheers

Most modern lace curtains are hand- or machine-washable, as are most modern sheers. This does not mean, however, that they should not still be handled with care. Follow the care instructions on the label and if there are no instructions, assume they are to be **only** professionally cleaned. Organdy sheers are very delicate and should only be professionally cleaned.

Tumbling your lace curtains in the dryer on the air cycle can help to remove dust from them.

### For your washable lace:

If you wish to give your lace curtains more body, freshly washed lace can be dipped in a light starch solution.

If, on the other hand, you would like your lace curtains to have a softer appearance, skip the starch and rehang them while they are still slightly damp. If you have metal hooks, insert a piece of tissue paper between the fabric and the hook until the curtains are completely dry. This will help to avoid potential staining from rust.



## COMMON DRAPERY & CURTAIN PROBLEMS

Following are some of the most common problems that occur with draperies and curtains.

### Sun Damage

Sun damage is often not apparent until draperies and curtains are cleaned, at which point, vertical tears may appear in the fabric throughout the panel. These tears occur more quickly in draperies and curtains with heavy sun exposure, but will also occur in draperies and curtains hung in shadier windows as well. Obviously, the more delicate the fabric, the more susceptible it is to damage. Lined draperies are more protected, but are not immune.

### Sun Fading

This appears as yellow or faded streaks, predominantly on the folds most exposed to sun light. Fibers in these areas may also appear worn, but may not have torn yet. Like sun damage, sun fading generally becomes most visible after cleaning. It tends to be more pronounced in fabrics of darker colors, since the contrast between the original and faded colors is greater.

### Fume Fading

Fume fading often becomes more apparent after cleaning for two reasons: either because soiling has masked the discoloration or because heat during the cleaning process has exacerbated it (or both). Unlike sun fading, fume fading results in streaky discolorations and does not tend to be uniform. It is caused by the interaction of certain dyes (often blues and greens) with household air pollutants.

### Water Marks

Condensation on windows caused by humid or rainy conditions can cause watermarks on draperies and curtains which are often very difficult, if not impossible to remove. Again, these marks may not become apparent until after the draperies or curtains have been cleaned because soiling can mask the discolorations.

### Shrinkage

It is important to remember that many manufacturers do not pre-shrink drapes and curtains. You can expect shrinkage of about 4% during the cleaning process.





## HIRING A SERVICE PROVIDER

*What do you need to look for when you need to hire a professional carpet and interior textile cleaning company? What questions do you need to ask?*

### GENERAL TIPS FOR HIRING A CONTRACTOR

Look for a company that offers personalized, customer-focused attention to detail. Check at least 2 or 3 of their references, verify their insurance, see what professional organizations they are affiliated with and confirm they are a member in good standing. Don't hesitate to trust your gut feeling—are you comfortable with the contractor? This is much more important than you might think.

NOTE: According to Consumer Reports, the biggest mistake consumers make is “being seduced by the price alone.” Would you hire the cheapest surgeon in town to operate on you or a member of your family? There is a saying, “Some of the most expensive work you will ever pay for is cheap work.” Consider that your home is your biggest investment, and you should always think long-term. Consider the consequences that saving a few dollars now over premature replacement costs. Your most important tool in evaluating the cost of a project is the value of what you are getting for your money. Low prices are usually a trade-off for cutting corners in materials, workmanship, warranty or adequate insurances. Remember that most average jobs can look good when completed. The true test is how they hold up over the next 10 years or more. Did the contractor use the proper methods and materials to give you a professional quality result? These differences are usually the difference between a lower and a higher estimate.