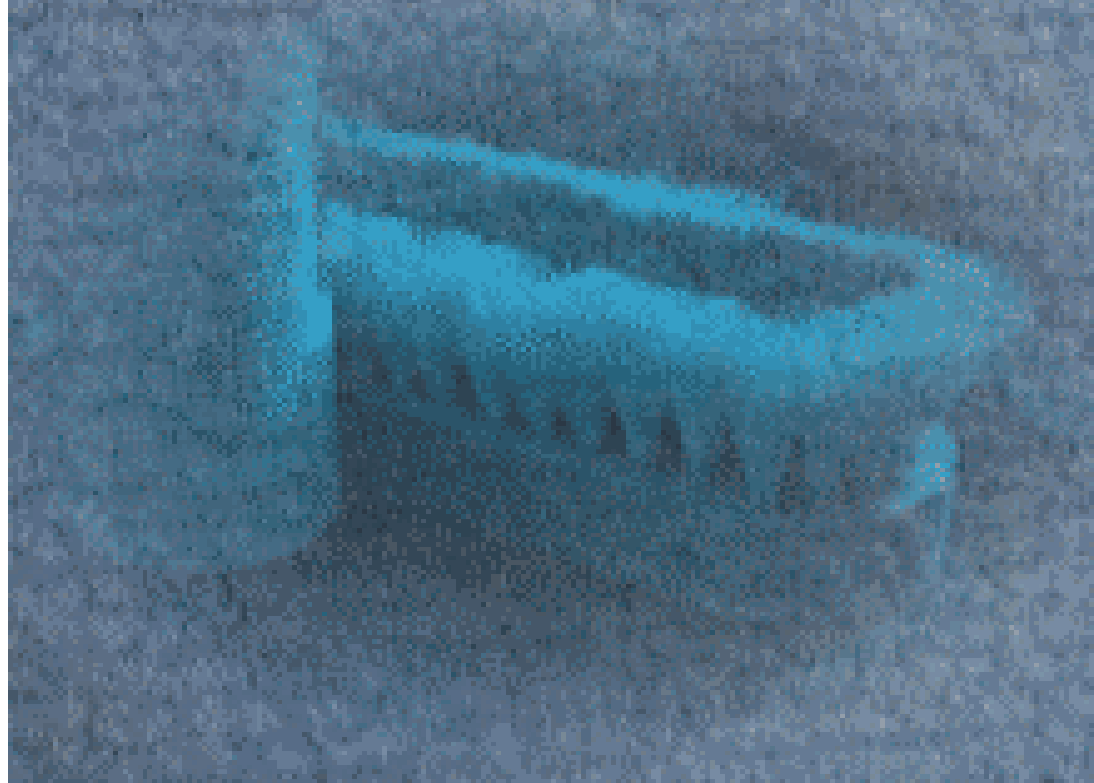


# How To Clean Your Carpet Like A Pro



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## **MAINTAINING YOUR CARPET.**

Maintaining the cleanliness of your carpeting is perhaps the greatest challenge. Most of us have seen the great results after cleaning, but are all too often saddened when we see that nice crisp look go downhill. So, what's the secret?

Well, unfortunately there is no magic involved in taking care of carpet, and to be sure the quality of the carpeting, installation, cushion, and traffic conditions all come into play with how good the carpet is going to look over time.

There are many things though that you can easily do to assure that you are doing your best when it comes to keeping your carpeting in the best shape possible.

## **HERE ARE SOME GUIDELINES.**

Probably the singular, most effective way for you to begin to take care of your carpeting is by following a very stringent vacuuming schedule. Vacuuming removes the dry soils from carpet that over time dull and scratch the thermoplastic synthetic fibers. When you vacuum, make sure you don't just do the visible soil: there is a lot of soiling that is there and some that you cannot even see. On the average, it takes about fifteen feet of walking into a home from outside to totally remove the dirt from one's shoes, therefore make sure you attend to those areas more carefully.

Also when you vacuum, don't be married to particular directions of strokes. Use a variance in the way you do it... that way you will not encourage any certain lay that the nap will have. For example, try vacuuming north to south, then east to west, west to east, south to north etc. Do all of this in one session. And when I say be regular in vacuuming, ideally you should be vacuuming at least once weekly or more thoroughly, and daily or every other day will not hurt. Do it as much as your home needs with respect to the traffic you get. Consider using a pile rake too, as these will separate the yarns, prevent matting and crushing to a degree, and just make the carpet look a little better. They're very easy to use and worth the inexpensive investment.

Also, keep areas adjacent to your carpeting clean. If you have a carpet off the kitchen floor, or near a slate entry way, make sure you keep those areas real clean. If your kitchen floor has an oily film on it from cooking, then you can be sure that the oily film will be on your

carpet too....if not by foot traffic then just by airflow when the oil was airborne.

Keep your shoes off when you walk on your carpet. If you have an asphalt driveway at your home, you are walking oil onto your carpet each time you walk from one to the other. Oily films attract dirt and your carpet will look soiled real quick. Plus you will be avoiding sand and grit from getting into the carpet, which will only lessen its life. Carpet is a textile and is subject to wear and poor appearance, even though it is designed as a floorcovering.

Remove spots as soon as you notice them. The longer they remain on the carpet, the more difficult they will be to remove

Clean traffic areas as soon as they become noticeable or even beforehand. That way you will not be doing salvage cleaning each time you clean it overall. Take the time and spend what you need to and get it looking up to par when you see it slide. Purchase a quality carpet shampoo and work it into those darker areas and use a wet vacuum to remove the excess. A professional quality shampoo will brighten the yarns as well as remove soils that will irritate you every time you look at it. All you have to do is mix it with hot water as directed and apply a small amount with a brush and get the yarns foamy. Work it in as you need to, you do not have to kill it. Then take your wet vacuum and get it all out. For extra rinsing required, apply some cool water to the shampooed area and then rinse that out afterward. You will be amazed at what you can do when you have your mind in good control over what you are doing.

It's a good idea to invest in a quality spraying device, like a real good pump up sprayer. That way you can apply shampoos and presprays, etc. to the carpet and avoid useless spray bottles when you are doing a large area. You will also be able to have a precise control over the amount of the product you apply, which is invaluable. Using hand held spray bottles are a waste of time with prespray products and shampoos... avoid it. Get a pump up type that is used for gardens and the like. You can get a pretty decent one at most hardware stores.

## **TIPS ON DOING YOUR CARPETS YOURSELF.**

Before I give you a hand at doing it yourself, let's look at both the advantages and disadvantages of cleaning your own carpet.

### **The Advantages:**

No doubt that if you clean your own carpet you can save money. Doing it yourself breeds a sense of accomplishment and skill that you did not have before. It's fun and exciting once you know the basics of cleaning. You can select exactly what you want to clean, whereas a lot of cleaners are not as flexible.

Whether you rent a machine or own your own, you can clean when you want and do not have an appointment to make with an outside firm. If you rent a machine you can use it all day or hang onto it for a few days, whatever you need. Having a professional all day can run up to \$100 - \$200.

### **The Disadvantages:**

Carpet cleaning is not easy work, so do not let the machine commercials on TV fool you into thinking that it is. When you see those machines advertised, you often see a casually dressed woman smiling with jewelry on and dress shoes. Prepare to sweat, maybe curse, and get irritated. Especially when you consider the whole idea of furniture moving. It is no fun at all. Go to a room in your home now and move all the furniture out of its way then put it back...how was it?

## **CARPET CLEANING TIPS**

I am making a few assumptions here giving you these tips: 1. you are renting a machine &

2. it is a hot water extraction method {steam cleaning}.

Some valuable tips:

1. The hotter the water, the better. For every 18 degrees above 118 degrees, chemical action is doubled. Therefore your cleaning product will work much better if you use the hottest water possible.

2. Use preconditioning products. These are known as prespotters, presprays, etc. and are generally sprayed onto the carpet before

cleaning. What these products do is prepare the soils to be rinsed out. Don't prepare the soil to be rinsed and it will be more difficult to clean... simple. Also, presprays have to come into total contact with all soiling.

This means that if your carpet is pretty soiled or if you have bad traffic areas, a light spray of a product simply will not penetrate to all areas of soiling. You have to apply what is needed to get into the grime. Not doing so will produce poor results. And let the prespray dwell on the carpet for ten minutes or so before you clean so it can have time to work.

3. Always prevacuum your carpet before cleaning. Even though you just vacuumed the carpet a week ago, do it again before you clean. Mud is a lot more difficult to remove when cleaning than oily soils, so get the dry soils out first with a thorough vacuuming,

4. Use a pile rake before vacuuming. Using a pile rake will separate the yarns and make soils loosen and easier to vacuum. Plus, after you use presprays, you can rake it in and make it penetrate better. And the carpet will be easier to clean after it's raked out and you can even rake the carpet after cleaning to give the carpet a fresh appearance and lift the pile.

5. Dealing with furniture. When you are cleaning a room with furniture in it, move the furniture out of its place a wall at a time, clean under it, and put it back. You do not have to take it right out of the room. If you want to, go right ahead, as an empty room is a lot less hassle to clean. But watch your back so you don't hurt yourself.

You cannot put furniture back on wet carpet unless you have something under it. Items with legs you can put small pieces of plastic underneath (cut up a trash bag) and the items without legs you will have to keep off the carpet with small pieces of wood or styrofoam. You have to do this as a lot of furniture will leave permanent staining on a damp carpet.

You can purchase small plastic or foil tabs and styrofoam from a store that rents machines, but you will pay through the nose. Cut up a plastic trash bag for the plastic ahead of time, and get a few sheets of styrofoam from a building supply store. You can score the styrofoam into 2x2 inch blocks with a sharp knife so they will break off easily.

6. Chemicals. Mix your cleaning products as specified on the label. If the product says two ounces per gallon of water, then putting four will not make your carpet cleaner. You will just have a machine full of foam after and be real sorry with residue problems.

Use quality products too. When you rent a machine, you will again pay through the nose for products most of the time, unless for some reason they happen to be selling professional products.

Professional products will definitely give you better results with better dilution ratios so you get more for your money. An average rinse detergent for a machine is mixed at 2 oz. per five gallons of water. That means you will be getting 320 gallons of cleaning solution from a gallon's worth of professional product. And an average cost for a gallon of professional rinse detergent will be about £10 or so, which will give you a lot more for your money. 320 gallons of cleaning solution is enough to supply you for a long time.

So don't fool yourself, you cannot beat professional products and they can only be purchased at a supply vendor and usually not from rental stores.

7. When you clean, take your time. Clean the carpet in sections. Just vacuum the whole thing first, then move the necessary furniture out of the way. Prespray the area with a preconditioner and allow it to sit for 10 minutes and then go over it with the cleaning tool, spraying down the hot rinse solution. Go back and forth until you are satisfied with the results and then make a few thorough vacuum only passes with the tool so you remove as much moisture as possible. Put your furniture back, protecting legs and bases as needed, and proceed to the next area. When you are tired, have a cup of tea and relax. If you rush, you will do a lousy job.

8. Make sure the machine is functioning properly. Check all of the hoses and make sure they are not leaking air or water. If they are, the machine will lose power and not clean as well. Make sure all of the fittings are tight and you have very good suction from the vacuum hose. Make sure the spray is even and covering the entire width of the tool that touches your carpet. And if the tool is equipped with some sort of agitator like a scrubbing brush or vibrating mechanism, make sure it's spinning properly and working right. Check all of these things before and during your cleaning.

## MAKE YOUR OWN CARPET SPOT REMOVER.

Here's a way for you to have some fun creating a neat spotting kit that will give you all the tools that are necessary to be able to tackle many common household spots and stains.

**Now, very important:** MAKE SURE ALL THAT IS INSTRUCTED HERE IS KEPT IN A VERY SECURE PLACE IN YOUR HOME AWAY FROM CHILDREN AND PETS.

MAKE SURE THAT EVERYTHING IS ALSO VERY CLEARLY LABELED AND KEPT TOGETHER, AND PREFERABLY IN SOME SORT OF BOX OR TRAY.

You need to assemble the following things:

1. One large bath towel. You will be using this for emergency spills.
2. Three smaller towels like the type you use to dry your dishes. These should be terry cloth and able to absorb liquids well.
3. Four spray bottles. Get some new unmarked ones from a hardware store or from a supermarket. This way you can label them and be able to read the contents as well.
4. One bottle of white vinegar, and make sure it's the white one, not the red wine one or you'll be sorry when you use it for spot cleaning.
5. One bottle of clear ammonia. Yes, same here, no lemon type that is coloured.
6. One bottle of hydrogen peroxide. Get the one that you use for cuts in the brown bottle, not the type to bleach hair.
7. Rust remover. You can purchase this from a hardware store usually, but I will tell you that it is also very dangerous to use, so I will leave this one to you.
8. A dry solvent spotter. You can buy one of these in a supermarket. This is the type of product that is like a dry cleaning fluid. Look at the label for this: contains petroleum distillates.
9. A butter knife or similar blunt tool.
10. A sponge.



11. A pair of manicure scissors.
12. Rubber gloves.
13. A soft brush, like the type to do a baby's hair.
14. A stiff brush.
15. Three boxes of baking soda.

Now I will tell you what to do with them. You will need something to label the spray bottles with, like a laundry marker. Get your four spray bottles. In the first one, just fill it with plain tap water and mark the bottle "Rinse water".

Now, get the second bottle and fill it halfway with warm water and add in just less than a half teaspoon of liquid detergent... laundry or dish, either is fine. When you have done that, fill the rest of the bottle with water and label this one "general detergent".

Next, do the same with the third bottle, except that you add in five tablespoons of ammonia along with the detergent, then fill the rest with water. Label this bottle "alkaline detergent".

For bottle number four, make the same mixture for "general detergent", but instead of filling the second half of the bottle with water, fill it with white vinegar, then label it "acid detergent".

You now have four valuable mixtures. One of the most valuable you will find of these is good old fashioned water... water, the universal solvent, because it will dissolve a great deal of what you will get on your carpet.

Now, keep the containers of ammonia and vinegar in the kit, because you will need them in addition to the mixtures you have just made.

#### SOME BASIC INFORMATION:

First of all you will be using your rinse water to rinse out anything that gets on your carpet, and after you use other spot removal procedures. This way you can be somewhat sure you have left the surfaces free of any residues. An occasional exception to this rule is when you are spotting oily stains.

You will be using the alkaline mix to spot most things that are organic... food, vomit, eggs, milk, blood etc.

You will be using the acid mixture to spot some dyes, urine, yellow spots and things like coffee or tea.

You will be using the general detergent just to give soapiness and lubrication to what you are doing, as well as use it to remove some spots too that are easier.

You will be using the dry solvent to remove oily spots like paint, tar, grease, gum etc.

The gloves are to protect your skin in the event you are working with anything you really do not want to touch, like gum or urine.

The blunt tool you will use to gently agitate a spot once the correct solution is on it, as well as like a spatula to work a liquid into a cloth.

The big towel you will use for large spills, the smaller ones for working with spots.

The soft brush you will be using if a small amount of brushing is necessary to loosen a spot. The stiff one will be used to help break up solidified spots.

Finally, the hydrogen peroxide you will be using as a bleaching agent. It's a weak one, and may require multiple applications over time but it is safe too.

NOW A WARNING.

Before you use any of these products on your carpet, test them in an inconspicuous area first, and make sure you read all of the information in these documents so that you do not make any costly mistakes.

## USING THE SPOT CLEANING KIT.

Before you actually try your kit, you should read on how to remove spots for some general good tips that you will need to know.

Let's spend a few minutes using the kit you have just made and doing some spot removal practise. Practise is what makes perfect, and here is your chance to exercise your newly acquired abilities to be a good spot remover. If you have not yet made up the spotting kit you can just skip over this section, but do not wait too long. Because you may put it off until when you really need it, and then your efforts will be made haphazardly.

What I would like you to do is get a scrap piece of carpet. Get a piece from your attic or basement, or even buy a small square runner of some sort to practise on.

Preferably, get a piece that is light in colour, so you can have a more challenging example to work on. Get some coffee or tea with milk and sugar in it and dump half a cup onto the carpet, near the edge. You will have to section the piece off because we will be using several soil examples. Next, get some grease or motor oil and rub a little onto the next section. On the third section, mash some jam or jelly into the carpet. On the fourth section, get a freshly chewed piece of gum or get some tar and stick it well onto the fibres. Then get a beverage like cola and pour a good amount onto a small section so that it penetrates the carpet well. On the last section get some wet mud and rub it well into the carpet. Let all of these things dry and set for a day or two.

So now you have coffee, grease, stuck food gum/tar, large liquid and mud. Now, let's practise. Get your kit ready.

Let's take our first example, the coffee. Sprinkle a small amount of general detergent onto the entire affected area and slightly beyond it. Agitate it gently with your blunt knife so the product penetrates. Get one of your small towels and blot the area, press it on well. Now look at the towel. Is there any transfer of coffee? If so, then you are on your way to removing it. If you need more strength, just apply the acid detergent and repeat the process. After you are through, apply your rinse water and get all of the products out. Good.

Hopefully that should have been easy for you. If any colouration remains, just apply a small amount of hydrogen peroxide with a sponge to the affected area and leave it. Chances are it will go away

with one or two applications.

Next, the grease. The first thing I want you to do is apply a small portion of the solvent spotter to the grease and let it sit for a few minutes. With a towel, work the spotter into the spot and use a gentle rubbing action and you should see some of it transferring to the towel. Repeat this process as much as necessary until you get it to the furthest you can. Then, apply the alkaline detergent and work it in the same manner until gone. Finally rinse with fresh water, blot dry. Easy? If not, repeat.

Now the jam or jelly. These usually come out pretty easily with just a real small amount of general detergent and really hot water. Run hot water over the spray bottle with general detergent in it and get it good and hot inside. Apply a small amount to the area, work it slowly with your blunt knife and it should easily loosen. Repeat if necessary. Wipe off with your towel and rinse with fresh water.

Now the gum. Try to loosen the gum as best as possible with your blunt knife. If it persists, make some indentations in it and apply your solvent spotter in small amounts. Let it sit and it will loosen the gum. Work it off slowly onto a towel. Apply your general detergent and fresh water as above, towel dry.

Large liquid spills. For cola or similar beverage, use your general detergent and see what you can get to transfer onto a towel. Then apply fresh water in a heavier amount and blot the spot by standing on the towel. This usually will remove a fair amount of it. Remember that larger spills usually wick up a bit after cleaning, so apply a fair amount of your baking soda to it, let dry a day and vacuum. Repeat if necessary the whole procedure if it remains the next day.

Mud. Mud is easy because once it dries you can usually aggressively vacuum the area and remove a real good amount of it. After you do that, just use either your general detergent or alkaline detergent. Doing this will loosen the rest and more than likely take care of the whole spot.

## **SOME PROBLEMS WITH CLEANING THAT CAN OCCUR.**

1. Carpet feels stiff after it's cleaned or it feels tacky.

More than likely there is a residue left in the carpet that is making this happen, or if you had a fabric protector applied, too much may have been applied or it may not have been properly brushed in. The way to correct this would be to rinse the entire carpet with cold water and observe if there is a difference when it dries. This is a common problem.

2. Spots always return after cleaning.

This usually indicates one or two things. Either the spot was of an oily nature and was not properly emulsified before rinsing, or it is a situation where it was a liquid that spilled and keeps wicking up. What you can do to correct this is to apply a solvent spotter to the area, rub with a towel. Then apply a small amount of alkaline detergent and put baking soda all over the affected area and leave it for a day and vacuum up the next day. More than likely this will correct the problem. If necessary, repeat if it shows up again.

3. I cannot get my traffic area clean.

More than likely they are just simply beyond cleaning or you have not cleaned them enough. Apply a professional prespray product to the area, rake it in with a carpet rake, and rinse it out with a good quality rinse detergent. If it has already been cleaned professionally, and competently, it may be a condition known as traffic lane grey, which means it is a pretty permanent scratching of the thermoplastic fibers from soiling.

4. I have black lines all around the edges of my carpet.

This is a condition known as filtration soiling and is generally caused by differing amounts of airflow and temperature. What happens is that airborne soils, often from a heating system, filter through those areas of the carpet and cause a black line. They are extremely difficult type of soiling to remove and will generally recur even after professional cleaning.

5. What do I do if I have a spot to remove and I have no idea what it is?

The first thing you should do is separate the yarns with your fingers and see how deep it is, so you will know how much of your product you should apply, then remove any solid matter from the area with your blunt tool and a towel. Then what you can do is the following: Apply solvent spotter, rub it in and see if anything loosens. If so, continue.

If it remains, use the general detergent and see if it responds. Use your towel and blunt tool. No luck? Try some ammonia in small quantities, then rinse with vinegar. At this point you should see some difference or transfer onto your towel. Then rinse everything out with fresh water. If not, you may wish to proceed with the hydrogen peroxide, but test in an inconspicuous area first though. Many applications over a period of time may be necessary.

6. Spots that I have removed before are still soapy and the foam will not go away and they resoil a lot.

You have a situation where your spot remover was used in excess or it was a poor quality product or you simply used something too soapy. You will need to use a defoamer on this area to correct it

7. When I vacuum my carpet, it does not look clean.

This may be because your vacuum needs to be emptied and is not providing good suction for some reason. Maybe it's time for a new one or to have it serviced. Make sure it's working properly at all times for the maximum benefit. Also, vacuum bags are filters and serve as temporary repositories for soil. They are not supposed to get full, only about halfway before changing.

8. What about those real expensive vacuums? Do they work better?

Yes and no. Some models are more powerful than others, but the point is that you do not have to spend 300 - 400 dollars to vacuum your carpet properly. You can do it with a 80 dollar vacuum and conscientious application of the principles outlined in this document.