

CARPET CLEANING TIPS

By the editors of Consumer Guide

Routine Carpet Cleaning

Vacuuming is where most people start when maintaining their carpeting. That, then, is where we'll start this article on carpet-cleaning tips. But it isn't where the article will end. We'll present all sorts of guidelines for cleaning, removing stains, and dealing with various other problems. For now, though, we'll get to the basics:

- Carpets need to be vacuumed once a week and more often in areas of heavy traffic. Frequent vacuuming prolongs the life of your carpet by preventing a buildup of gritty particles that can cut carpet fibers. Every few weeks, take a little extra time and use your crevice tool for cleaning around baseboards and radiators and in other hard-to-reach places.
- To vacuum wall-to-wall carpeting, divide the floor into quadrants and vacuum an entire quadrant before moving on to the next.
- Take your time when you vacuum a carpet, especially a plush carpet in which dirt is sure to be deeply embedded. One pass with a high-powered upright is not enough. Go over each section of carpeting several times, and work slowly to allow the suction to remove all the ground-in dust and dirt.
- Pay special attention to the areas where people sit and move their feet. Vacuum these areas of heavy traffic with a crisscross pattern of overlapping strokes.
- Soil retardants can be applied to new carpets or to newly cleaned carpets. Follow manufacturer's advice. Apply soil retardants only with professional equipment using the recommended application techniques.
- Add baking soda to the bag in your vacuum to fight odors.

Odors are one thing – spots and spills are quite another. Spots and spills happen to just about every carpet and can be difficult to remove. In the next section, we'll offer some pointers for getting rid of those blemishes.

Cleaning Carpet Spots and Spills

Here's Rule No. 1 regarding spots and spills on your carpeting: Clean them immediately. If you catch the spill when it's fresh, you've got a good chance of removing it totally. Consider these tips, too:

- Carefully blot or scrape the entire area before applying any cleaning solution. Remove as much of the spill as possible.
- Before using any cleaning solution, test your carpet in an inconspicuous area to make sure the cleaner won't damage or discolor it. Test the cleaning agents that you keep on hand before you have to use them to make sure they will not harm your carpet.
- Do not rub the spill – that might spread the problem to a larger area.
- When you apply spot cleaner, work from the outside of the stain toward the inside to avoid spreading the stain. After applying a cleaning solution, blot up all the moisture.
- A clean white bath towel is unsurpassed for drying carpet and brushing the nap back up to a standing position.
- If you feel that there is still too much moisture after blotting the carpet, place a ¾" thick stack of white towels over the spot and weight them down with a heavy object.

What should you do if your carpet is soiled by chocolate? Or urine? Or mud? In the next section, we'll provide answers to these and other questions.

Treating Specific Carpet Stains

From wine to chewing gum, your carpeting has a lot of potential enemies. In this section, we'll tell you how to remove a variety of specific stains:

- **Acid stains:** Acid spills, such as drain cleaner or vinegar, demand quick action. Dilute them immediately with baking soda and water or with club soda. Then apply a solution of ammonia (1 part) and water (10 parts). Rinse with cold water, let dry, and vacuum gently.
- **Alcoholic beverages:** Quickly dilute the spot with cold water. Absorb the excess liquid. Then mix 1 teaspoon mild detergent, 1 teaspoon white vinegar, and 1 quart warm water. Apply the solution to the spot, and let the carpet dry. Vacuum gently.
- **Blood:** Absorb as much of the blood as you can. Then mix 1 teaspoon mild detergent, 1 teaspoon white vinegar, and 1 quart warm water. Apply the solution to the spot, and let dry. Apply dry cleaning fluid. Vacuum gently after the carpet is dry.
- **Butter:** Scrape up as much of the butter as you can. Apply dry cleaning fluid, and let the carpet dry. If the spot remains, repeat the procedure. Vacuum gently.
- **Candle wax:** Press an ice cube against the wax stain. The wax will harden and can then be pulled off.

- **Catsup:** Sponge a mixture of 1 cup vinegar and 2 cups water into rug, frequently wring out sponge until stain is gone.
- **Chewing gum:** Chewing gum can be a sticky mess, so harden it by pressing an ice cube against the blob of gum. Once hardened, the gum can be pulled off.
- **Chocolate:** Immediately scrape the chocolate from the carpet. Mix 1 teaspoon mild detergent, 1 teaspoon white vinegar, and 1 quart warm water. Apply the solution to the spot. Rinse well. Vacuum gently.
- **Coffee:** Blot spilled coffee immediately. Then mix 1 teaspoon mild detergent, 1 teaspoon white vinegar, and 1 quart warm water. Apply the solution to the spot, and let dry. Apply dry cleaning fluid. Vacuum gently after the carpet is dry.
- **Crayon:** Scrape away excess crayon or remove it by placing a blotter over the crayon stain and pressing it with a warm iron until the blotter absorbs the melted crayon. Move the blotter frequently so that it doesn't get oversaturated. Apply dry cleaning fluid, and let the carpet dry. Vacuum gently.
- **Fruit:** Fruit stains can be very hard to remove if they are allowed to set, but if you act quickly this method usually prevents a permanent stain. Scrape up spilled fruit, and absorb fruit juice. Mix 1 teaspoon mild detergent, 1 teaspoon white vinegar, and 1 quart warm water. Apply the solution to the spot, and let the carpet dry. If the spot remains, repeat the procedure. Vacuum gently.
- **Gravy:** Wipe up as much of the spilled gravy as possible. Mix 1 teaspoon mild detergent, 1 teaspoon white vinegar, and 1 quart warm water. Apply the solution to the spot. Let the carpet dry. Apply dry cleaning fluid, and let the carpet dry. Vacuum.
- **Mud:** Allow the mud to dry completely then brush or scrape off as much as possible. Mix 1 teaspoon mild detergent, 1 teaspoon white vinegar, and 1 quart warm water. Apply the solution to the spot. Let the carpet dry. If the stain remains, apply dry cleaning fluid and blot dry. When the spot is completely dry, vacuum gently.
- **Salad dressing:** Absorb as much salad dressing as you can. Mix 1 teaspoon mild detergent, 1 teaspoon white vinegar, and 1 quart warm water. Apply the solution to the spot. Let the carpet dry. If the spot remains, repeat the procedure. Vacuum gently.
- **Soft drinks:** The carbonation in soft drinks will help you clean spilled drinks quickly, but act fast because some of the dyes in the drinks can permanently stain your carpet. Blot up the spilled drink. Mix 1 teaspoon mild detergent, 1 teaspoon white vinegar, and 1 quart warm water. Apply the solution to the spot. Let the carpet dry. If the spot remains, repeat the procedure. Vacuum gently.
- **Urine:** Mix 1 teaspoon mild detergent, 1 teaspoon white vinegar, and 1 quart warm water. Apply the solution to the spot. Let the carpet dry. If the spot remains, repeat the procedure. Vacuum gently.
- **Vomit:** Treat vomit quickly. Blot up as much as possible, then dilute immediately with baking soda and water or with club soda. Apply a solution of 1 part ammonia and 10 parts water. Rinse with cold water, let dry, and then vacuum.
- **Wine:** When red wine is spilled on your carpet, dilute it with white wine, then clean the spot with cold water and cover with table salt. Wait ten minutes, then vacuum up the salt.

When nothing seems to work, you may want to try a deep cleaning.

Guidelines for Stain and Spot Removal from carpet and rugs

1. **Immediately blot up as much of the liquid stain as possible** using a soft, white absorbent material like a towel or napkin. Though most of the carpets produced today are treated with stain-resistant treatments, no carpet can be said to be completely stain-proof. And the longer the stain remains in the carpet, the more permanently it sets into it.
2. **Scrape away the solid or semi-solid stain using a blunt spatula or spoon.** Never use a knife as its sharp edges could harm the pile fibers.
3. **Never scrub or brush a stain;** scrubbing can harm the fibers and have the adverse reaction of making the stain set into the carpet or rug.
4. **Vacuum away as much of the solid stain as possible.**
5. **Pretest the spot removal agent on an inconspicuous area of the carpet.** Follow the instructions carefully. Apply a few drops to each color in the carpet. Press a clean, white towel or napkins lightly over it for approximately 30 seconds. Check both the towel (or napkin) and the carpet for color transfer, color change or any other damage. Try another spot removal if you notice any change.
6. To clean the spot, **apply a small amount of spot removal agent to the soft, white, absorbent material and gently apply to the stain,** working from the edges towards the center of the spot to prevent it from spreading. Continue as long as the stain is getting transferred onto the towel. Apply more solution to a fresh area on the towel and repeat the process as long as the stain is being removed. Patience is a virtue as far as this step is concerned!
7. **In cases where you need to apply more than one spot removal agent in a sequence,** continue applying the first spot removal agent as long as there is any improvement; then move on to the next one.
8. After the spill has been removed completely, **rinse out the affected area with water and blot dry** to remove the cleaning solution completely as any residue may attract soil and cause damage to the carpet. To effectively blot up the water, you may use clean, dry towels weighed down by flat, heavy objects like a book; keep changing the towel as they become saturated.
9. **Do not overwet the area.** Overwetting of carpets while cleaning may cause damage to the carpet.