

How to Choose a Carpet

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Buying the perfect carpet is easy. All you need is your own good taste, plus some knowledge.

Part 1 What to Look For

1. First, Think Thick

Good carpet is thick carpet. The yarns should be packed tightly together. Look deep. You shouldn't be able to see the backing through the yarns. The more dense the construction the better wear the carpet has in heavy traffic areas like hallways and children's rooms. Under heavy use, less dense carpet tends to mat down and lose its luster.

2. Construction Makes a Difference

Popular styles of carpet are basically made the same way. Tufts of yarn are pushed through a sturdy waterproof backing. Sometimes these tufts are in the form of loops (looped pile construction). Sometimes the loops are cut (cut pile construction). Then sometimes looped pile and cut pile are combined in gorgeously creative ways. Just remember, carpet with short piles usually wears better and lasts longer than carpet with taller piles. There is a large range in carpet density when it comes to construction. Working with an experienced carpet retailer can help you identify the type of carpet to best suit your needs and budget.

Part 2

Two Primary Types of Carpet

*Popular types of carpet construction,
fig. 1-3.*

1. Looped Pile Construction

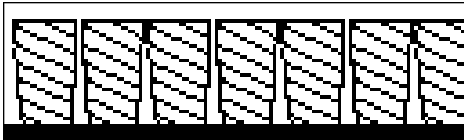


Looped pile construction offers an informal look, and can look great even with a decorative rug on top to define a space in a room.

When loops are 1/4 inch or less in height, this construction has exceptional wear performance.

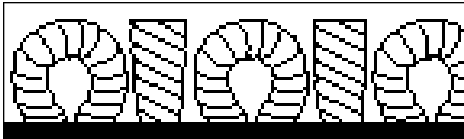
Longer, taller loops offer a softer, more luxurious feel. However, to avoid the much dreaded “matted down” look use taller loop carpets primarily in low traffic areas like bedrooms.

2. Cut Pile Construction



Cut pile available in various heights and twists of the yarn. Looser yarn twists tend to be less dense and therefore enjoy a shorter life. However, a shag-rug can be ideal for bringing a retro-modern look to a room. Shorter heights and tighter twists are more durable and can even be made to look like luxurious velvet. The range in color and pattern is vast. Taking samples home is always a good idea.

3. Cut and Loop Piles, Combined



Using the two constructions together, along with variations in heights, enables carpet designers to create dramatic sculptured effects, such as diamonds, squares, circles, swirls and more. Depending on the design, this can give you a formal look or a distinctly modern look. It can also be an excellent carpet choice for cutting down on your vacuum time.

Part 3 - Fibers

Carpet fibers, explained.

Carpets are made with different kinds of fibers. These fibers are created with everything from New Zealand wool, to sea grass, to recycled plastic water bottles. Each fiber has its own characteristics. The trick is to match as many of your particular needs as possible with those characteristics. Wool, for example, is excellent at standing up to wear and is naturally fire-retardant. This chart of the most popular carpet fibers should help with your decision.

Carpet Fiber Comparison

	Wool	Nylon	Olefin	Acrylic	Polyester
Bounce Back Quality	Excellent	Good	Fair	Good	Poor
Resistance to Wear	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Fair
Stain and Soil Resistance	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Very Good	Fair
Sunlight Fading Resistance	Good	Good	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent

About the exotic fibers like sisal, jute and sea grass: They come in all sorts of elegant, contemporary patterns and hues. But note, they are naturally absorbent. Even a little moisture can make them shrink and expand. So avoid using them in humid areas like kitchens and basements. And usually they can fade when exposed for long periods to direct sunlight. Some are good for high traffic areas, others not so good. Your carpet store expert can help. Man-made sisal-like carpets are also available. They're softer underfoot and release stains better than real sisal.

Section 4 - Color

Use color to set the mood.

Colorful Considerations

With literally hundreds of carpet colors and color combinations to choose from, this is a tough one. Some helpful tips:

- Lighter colors, like dove gray, lend a spacious feel to a room.
- Don't shy away from darker colors. They can make a room seem cozier.
- Warmer colors, like apricot, add warmth to a cool north-facing room.
- Cooler colors, like teal, work well in rooms on the warm, sunny side of the house.
- Neutral colors gracefully blend in and go almost unnoticed.
- Bolder colors create a focal point and demand attention.
- Go bold or go subtle, try to almost match, not exactly match, any color already present in the room. This helps to unite your décor.
- Have an indoor pet? To minimize vacuuming you might keep in mind the color of their coat.

Finally, remember, color is revealed by the light that falls on it. And store lighting is not the same as your home lighting. So before you settle on anything, select a few carpet samples to take home for a real world evaluation.

Section 5 - Padding

Carpet Loves Padding

It's not pretty. It's not sexy. But padding is more important than you might think. It's there to help prolong your carpet's useful life by absorbing much of the impact of foot traffic. But wait. Softer isn't better. Overly soft padding can easily bottom out letting your carpet handle the full impact. Look for firm padding with a high performance rating. And think low profile. Thick padding can cause interference with opening doors. For most cut pile carpet, the padding should be no more than 7/16 inches high. For lower profile loop pile carpet like Berber, go with padding no more than 3/8 inches high. Again, here is where you should look for a Diamond – certified carpet retailer whose expertise you can trust.

Padding, The Good, The Bad and The Ugly

WAFFLE RUBBER - Offers the correct height, but its open construction can crush down, so choose a heavy weight version.

URETHANE FOAM - Made in different densities and thicknesses. For good performance, look for the heavier densities.

FLAT RUBBER - Very good performance providing excellent long-lasting support, but can be a little expensive.

REBOND - High-density urethane, very popular. Choose at least 5-pound option or heavier for high traffic areas.

SYNTHETIC FIBER - Made with recycled fiber, which is good, but offers inferior support, mats down with heavy use.

Carpets aren't all made alike. The same is true for carpet stores. Some hints for finding a good one: (1.) Look for a store with people who really know carpet. If you get the feeling they were somewhere else last week selling large appliances, smile and leave. (2.) The carpet selection should be vast, fresh and well lighted. No thin veneer of dust. No worn samples. (3.) The store should have its own team of expert carpet installers. Carpet installation takes special skill and training.

This book, compliments of:



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