

Tips for Creating Your Dream Space by Sara Shragal

Steamed about the cleanliness of your carpets?

Carpet maintenance and stain-removing tips for the winter months.

By Sara Shragal

While everybody enjoys a white Christmas and winter does present lots of fun recreational options, it can be a bear on your carpets—particularly as people transition from inside to outside and back again. That’s why many homeowners delay hiring a rug cleaning company or renting a steam cleaner until spring.

So while you may delay any major cleanings until after the winter, you still want your carpets and upholstery to look good. And that means regular maintenance.

When it comes to your carpets and upholstery, the biggest enemy is dust. That’s why a weekly vacuuming of your rugs and a monthly vacuuming of your upholstery is a good practice to observe.

Dust is also a good reason not to attempt shampooing your carpets on your own. The length of the drying process exposes your carpets and upholstery to additional dust, essentially defeating the purpose of your cleaning. So, best to leave major cleaning to the steam cleaners—either ones you rent or the professionals you hire.

Even the most effective steam cleaner can’t shield you from the unexpected stains that come with every day living. And for that, you need a game plan.

Fortunately, most carpets today come with a stain-resistant treatment. This treatment allows stains to be removed more easily. However, the quicker you get to a spill, the easier it will be to remove and conversely, the longer a spill sits, the harder it will be to remove. Here’s a look at the three most common kinds of spills and how to treat them:

- **Liquids** – When a liquid is spilled onto the carpet, blot the area with a clean white cloth. Don’t rub the spot as this will only work the spill further into the carpet fiber and backing. Rinse the spot with water and blot again. You can also use a mild dishwashing liquid on a wet rag to blot the area. Use club soda for red wine or grape juice spills. Continue rinsing with clean water and blotting until stain is removed.
- **Semi-Solids** – One of the kids just threw his or her peanut butter and jelly sandwich on the carpet. Before taking any disciplinary action, you’ll want to address the floor situation ASAP. Remove the substance by lifting it off the carpet with a spoon or spatula. Then repeat the same steps as you would for a liquid spill. Using a bit of dry cleaning solution can often help as you blot the area.

- **Solids** – Pets add a lot to our lives. Unfortunately, in the case of stains, a bit more than we'd like. For solid pet stains that have dried, pick them up with a clean paper towel and then vacuum. You can then use a mixture of mild dishwashing detergent and warm water to blot the area until clean.

In terms of protecting your carpet from daily wear and tear incurred during the winter months, your best course of action is to create a “mud room” or designate an area for people to take off their wet shoes. Of course, this only works as long as the occupants of the house comply. But if they don't, at least you have a good, pardon the pun, floor plan.

Sara Shragal is a staff writer for DirectBuy. For more information or other helpful tips for your home, visit www.directbuycares.com. You can send suggestions for future columns to questions@directbuycares.com.