

Good carpet can make a big difference in your home

A good carpet can add an air of elegance or cozy warmth to any room in your home. What should you look for when you set out to buy a new one?

Here are some pointers.

Choosing style and colour – Keep the floor treatment simple to make redecorating easier, or if there's a chance you might decide to use the room for something else. A more neutral decor also appeals to prospective home buyers.

Give colour a lot of thought. That great-looking swatch in the showroom could overpower your living room. Bring samples home, or have them delivered, and lay them out on the floor around the room. How does the light affect them as the day goes on?

Mull over your options for a few days, and try out a variety of colours and shades. You could incorporate a bold splash of colour with a border or centrepiece on a more neutral background.

Scale and pattern should be appropriate to a room. Large patterns, particularly colourful ones, and dark colours seem to decrease a room's size. Busy patterns can be distracting and make decorating changes difficult. Light colours will make a room open up, and appear more spacious.

Quality counts – When it comes to carpet quality, you really do get what you pay for. The density of a carpet is based on the number of yarns per square inch, and the more yarn, the more durable the carpet. Each piece of yarn twists out from the carpet backing, and the greater the twist, the higher the quality. The twists add resiliency, and spring back into shape when they're crushed.

Wool carpets are generally the best quality, and also the most expensive. There are excellent synthetic carpets on the market. You want your carpet to be resilient and soft under foot, with good resistance to soiling. They should be treated to provide maximum protection against dirt and damage.

What works well where – Be practical, and ask how well this stand up to puppies, dirty shoes, mucky kids, juice and cola spills? A subtle pattern can minimize the effects of spills and stains.

For heavy-traffic areas like kitchens and entrance halls, choose a carpet with a hard, high-density pile that's specially designed for high-volume traffic. A twist-weave carpet shows fewer foot prints.

Stair carpets help solve noise problems, but they take for more wear and tear than other carpets, and wear out faster. You should use a high-density carpet in the same colour as a plusher piece for colour continuity. It may even be worth buying and storing extra carpet to replace worn-out pieces.

Family room carpet should be tough enough to be practical, yet soft enough to be comfortable. Stain-resistant treatments are worth it here.

The bedroom's the place to go for an expanse of soft, single-shade carpet that makes you want to get out of bed on cold mornings. It also cuts down on noise.

Bathroom carpets should be moisture-resistant, mildew proof and have an easy-to-clean weave.

A top-notch finish – Go for the best installation and finish for a good-looking carpet that will last for years. If the carpet's in sections, make sure the pile, or nap, runs the same way. If seams run perpendicular to the largest window, they'll be parallel to rays of light. Keep seams out of heavy-traffic areas. A seam across a doorway will show signs of wear and tear.

For the plushiest look, have the pile lean towards the doorway. On stairs, have the nap running from top to bottom with the direction of the nap laying down the stairs.

If your home is new and you're putting carpet on top of concrete, make sure there's no moisture problem. Concrete can retain some moisture for months after being laid, and it can wick it up from the ground.



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