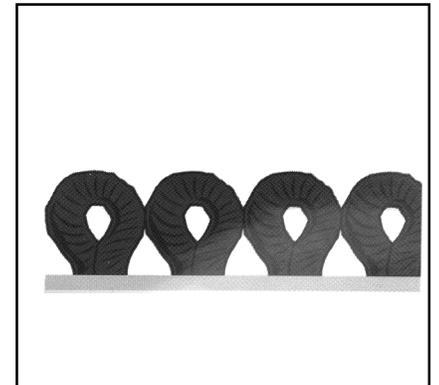


The Carpet Factor

How Does The Fiber Content Of Your Carpet Affect It's *Clean-Ability*?

When purchasing a carpet, the biggest question is “How long will it last?”. In asking that question, one must consider the clean-ability of that particular carpet. Even though the construction of the carpet plays a significant role in the life of the carpet, the fiber type is extremely important.

Before getting into this article, let it be made clear that this advice is not to override the recommendations of your carpet retailer. This article is simply to state some of the characteristics of 3 fiber types commonly used in carpeting in order to provide an understanding of how that plays a role in soiling and particularly wear.



There are many fiber types used in carpet manufacturing, however, for the purpose of this article we will focus on the 3 main players. These will also be the ones you are most familiar with:

1. Olefin (polypropylene)

2. Nylon

3. Wool

Olefin (also called polypropylene) has become extremely popular in recent years. The first attraction to olefin is the price. Olefin is generally less expensive than other fibers although not always. The second appeal is that the fiber will not absorb any liquid. If you were to take a yarn from an olefin carpet and place it in a glass of water, the fiber would float on the top of the water. Nylon and wool would not, since each would absorb a certain amount of water. The point is that when something is spilled on olefin carpet, it will not be absorbed into the fiber. The value is that permanent staining from spillage is reduced. In addition, olefin carpets are solution dyed, which means that the color is introduced to the molten plastic before the fiber is made.

This characteristic can also present unique cleaning challenges. Sometimes when spillage occurs, it runs down the side of the yarn into the backing of the carpeting. Many times this can cause wicking problems as the spill gets trapped in the backing of the carpet, and is not effectively removed. Therefore, it continues to wick up the surface over time. In addition, if an inexperienced carpet cleaner leaves too much liquid in the carpet after cleaning, it simply slides down to the backing of the carpet with the soils, and as the carpet dries, it wicks back to the surface.

The second challenge with olefin is a characteristic that is often overlooked: Olefin fibers are less resilient than others. What that means in plain and simple terms is that when a fiber is crushed, it doesn't "bounce back" as well as other fibers. It also "scratches" very easily. A very common occurrence with olefin installations is that the traffic areas may begin to look dingy or worn. In fact what has happened is that the fibers have been scratched from foot traffic. If you can imagine a plastic toy that has a scratch on it, there is nothing you can do to remove that scratch. It's permanent. The same is true of an olefin fiber - once it is scratched, nothing can be done to correct it. In a high traffic area, the carpet may appear completely different than the edges against the wall.

The third interesting characteristic of olefin is that it is an "oil loving" fiber. In other words, in the same way that it repels water based soil, it absorbs and accepts oil based soils, in turn making common oil based soils in a household difficult to remove such as lamp oil, lotion, body oils, cooking oils, etc. This can be especially important just outside a kitchen area for example. Some of the higher quality carpet mills "scour" the olefin to attempt in reducing the oil attracting properties. Our company uses special cleaning agents that have been manufactured for effectively cleaning olefin carpets.

Nylon has definitely been the most widely used fiber in the residential environment, and for good reason. Nylon is very resilient, has good dry soil resistance and doesn't present as many cleaning challenges.

Nylon is also very resistant to spillage. Since most residential nylon is not solution dyed but dyed after the carpet is made, it is not impossible to stain, however if the spot is attended to in a timely manner, one can expect excellent spot removal results. Residential nylon carpets are also treated with a fluorochemical such as 3M Scotchgard, or DuPont Teflon which helps tremendously with dry soil resistance and stain resistance.

According to a Consumer Reports article in the August 1998 issue, branded nylons performed better than non-branded ones.

Wool is more resistant to foot traffic than any other fiber. This is the reason that you see Oriental rugs that have lasted for so many generations. Wool hides dry soil naturally and is not adversely affected by it for quite some time. Another wonderful aspect of wool is that it is a great insulator. In the winter your home will be warmer inside and in the summer it will be cooler. However, the cheaper wools stain easily and may not be the choice where children and pets are present.



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3 Keys to Successful Spot Cleaning

There are a few things to keep in mind when spotting your own carpet:

1. All spots are not created equal.

All spots should not be cleaned with the same product. For example urine spots that are dried should be cleaned with an “acid side” spotter due to the fact that the PH of urine changes within hours of drying. Oil or grease spots require a solvent based spotter, and do-it-yourself traffic area cleaning is best approached with a dry compound material, leaving just food and general spots for the general spotter. Bottom line: To do the best job in spotting your carpet, call us to order a carpet maintenance kit.

2. Using the wrong product can actually cause a permanent stain.

Many over the counter products are high in alkaline content and can actually “set” the stain. In addition, some tend to leave heavy residues that cause spots to resoil quickly.

3. Spot cleaning is not a substitute for professional traffic area cleaning.

Leaving traffic areas without professional attention for long periods of time will allow abrasive soils to damage carpet beyond remedy.

Run Spot Run

WARNING: Runners and Rugs Over Carpeted Traffic Areas Can Permanently Discolor Your Carpet

Be careful using rugs or runners over carpet in high traffic areas. Doing so may cause a permanent soil line on your carpet! Along the edge of the rug or runner gets exposed to traffic, soil and light while the carpet under the runner gets no light, no traffic, and no soil. The result: When you remove the rug or runner, there will be an obvious square and the worn area will not be able to be restored to it's original condition. To prevent this condition, clean your traffic areas regularly, therefore eliminating the need for runners or rugs. *If you want to keep your rugs over your carpet, move them around from time to time.

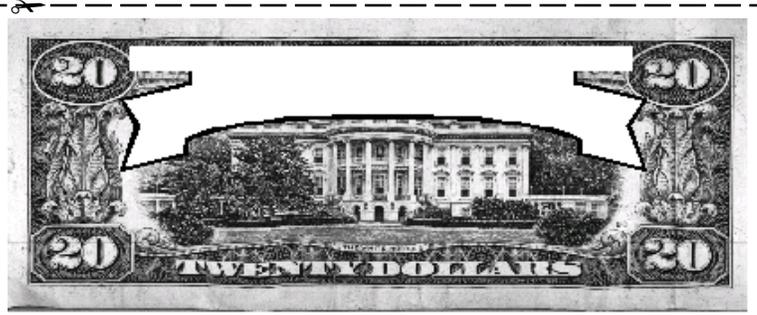
Trivia: **CHEERS!**

Why do Americans click their glasses together when toasting? Well, legend has it that about a hundred years ago, somewhere in Scandinavia a toast was taking place. Referring to the contents in their glasses, the guests began observing, and said “We can see it; we can taste it; and we can feel it; but we can't hear it!” and then clicked their glasses together. So, **CHEERS TO YOU!**

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Credentials, Associations, and References



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“The Lewis Carpet Team has cleaned at my home and office, they both look like new. The quality of their work was beyond our expectations. Would we use them again? In a heartbeat.

Paula Uccelli, Redwood City, CA

“I am a property manager and I will not use anyone else. Lewis Carpet Cleaners has saved a lot of our carpets. They really can get a lot of the spots out.”

Robin Cunha, Redwood City, CA

“I have been very satisfied with Lewis Cleaners. Over the past 5 years or so Lewis Cleaners has cleaned my carpets at both my home and business. I see the same people return each time to do the work, which gives me confidence in the company. Such few turnovers speaks well of the management. Thank you”

Josie Hadley, Los Altos, CA



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