

The Consumer's Guide to Carpet Cleaning

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Fresh Floors

*We make the places you live, sleep, eat, play, & work the healthiest place to be
through the specialized cleaning of **carpet, upholstery, ceramic tile & grout.***

A note to those who see the value in carpet cleaning:

Properly choosing a carpet cleaning professional can be very difficult. I know this is true due to the overwhelming amount of misinformation, confusing offers, and crazy claims I see every day. Sadly, there are unethical people out there that use ridiculously low prices to bait and switch customers, high pressure sales tactics, methods of cleaning carpet that don't make your environment a healthier place to be, and technicians that they picked up this morning in the parking lot of the local big box retailer.

I have found that ethically, it is better to make sure that clients are educated in the proper way of cleaning carpet, and then they can decide for themselves what action they want to take. I purposely used customers in the first paragraph and clients in the last sentence to be sure that you know that there is a difference. Customers are people who buy from a company (usually only once), clients are people who build lasting relationships with the companies that they choose to do business with. I would much rather have clients than customers.

In this guide you will discover these things that the unethical cleaning companies do not want you to know:

If after you read this information, you still have questions; feel free to call me at (513) 673-0740. Our business is dedicated to educating our clients to make the best possible decisions.

Thank you,

Stephen Knox

Common Carpet Cleaning Frauds

Advertising Ridiculously Low Prices

Most people are attracted by low prices, which is not always a bad thing. We all have a budget that we TRY to stay within so we can be sure that we are going to make it to the beach this summer. However, it is a common practice of unethical businesses to use this tactic to get their foot wedged in the front door. Once they get to your house to clean, they will try to 'add on' for vacuuming, moving furniture (you REALLY cleaned around my tennis shoes?!), or re-applying protector, things which should be included in a carpet cleaning service. It would be like getting a great deal on a sports car, but have to pay extra for the wheels.

The Ol' Bait and Switch

In this scenario the carpet cleaning company quotes you another ridiculously low price (they forget to mention that the price is only for straight steam extraction). When they arrive at your home they switch you to the full method, which includes the actual cleaning agent. If you figure it out in time, and refuse the switch, you will not only get inferior results, but likely bad attitudes and poor workmanship. Also, this method is sure not to carry any warranty with it.

False Claims

This often presents itself in dogmatic statements such as: "MY cleaning method is the only one that works, and that other guy's method is horrible!" This statement could be used next to a picture of a child stomping his feet. The truth is the correct cleaning method for you, is the cleaning method that meets the goals that you have. If you want your carpet to dry quickly, a low moisture method may serve you best. Don't be pressured into a method that doesn't work best for you.

9 Carpet Cleaning Myths

1. You should wait until your carpet looks bad to get your carpets cleaned.

Dirt is to carpet fibers as sandpaper is to wood. When you walk on your carpet, the fibers are cut and damaged by the dirt, just like wood is scuffed up when you rub sandpaper on it. Once the carpet fibers are damaged, they cannot be repaired. As much as one pound of dirt can be found in one square foot of carpet without the appearance being greatly affected. The longer you wait to have your carpet cleaned, the more damaged it will become.

2. Removing dirt is the only reason to have your carpets cleaned.

Removing dirt is a very good reason to have your carpets cleaned. However, there are many other contaminants that can be found hiding in your carpet: *dust mites, air pollution, chemicals from automobile exhaust, pollens, fungus, grease, pet dander, and tobacco smoke*; just to name a few. According to the U.S. EPA, poor indoor air quality costs the American Economy \$60 billion in lost worker productivity every year.

If maintained properly your carpet can act as your homes largest filter, but if left unclean, it can contribute to allergies, and poor indoor health quality.

3. All methods of carpet cleaning are the same.

While I agree that all methods of carpet cleaning have a time and place where they are effective based on the needs of a client, they do not all reach the same level of effectiveness. Many methods of carpet cleaning, such as encapsulation, dry foam, dry chemicals, and dry compounds are excellent forms of maintenance cleaning, but they are not a deep clean.

Hot water extraction (often called steam cleaning) from a truck mounted unit is the most effective form of carpet cleaning when it comes to the removal of dirt, grime, bacteria, chemicals, and other pollutants that are embedded in your carpets. A few reasons this is the most effective form are:

- The cleaning solution is sprayed deep into the carpet with a pressurized sprayer.
- The water from a truck mount unit used in rinsing the carpet reaches about 250 degrees Fahrenheit, which is much more effective in breaking up the contaminants in your carpet.
- The vacuum, which is connected to the engine of the van, uses powerful suction to extract all of the cleaning agents and contaminants out of your carpet, leaving it fresh and clean.

4. Having the right equipment is all a cleaning company needs to clean carpet properly.

Oh, how I wish this was true. I could have saved lots of money that has been spent on education. Unfortunately, some unethical carpet cleaners out there grab anybody and *their brother* off the street to wet your carpet down. It is important that the technicians have been properly trained prior to cleaning your carpets.

5. The Company that advertises the lowest price is the one I should hire.

If they have the lowest price there is usually a good reason for it:

- They bid the project incorrectly and will try to cut corners to make up for the mistake.
- They do not invest in education for their employees and may do an inferior job.
- They do not buy the best machinery, cleaning agents and protectors, which your carpets deserve.
- They do not have the proper insurances to be doing work in your home. Did you know that if a company does not have workers compensation, and an employee is injured in your home, you may be required to pay for the medical attention they receive?
- The price you see advertised is not the price you will end up paying. Once the company gets their foot in the door with the unbelievable price, they may try the *ol' bait and switch* or the hard up sell to make up the difference.

6. Honest carpet cleaners should be able to give me a quote over the phone.

Honestly, most trustworthy carpet cleaners price their services by the square foot. There are so many factors that go into the proper cleaning of your carpets, that a good accurate price cannot be achieved unless the carpet is inspected.

- **The amount of carpet to be cleaned.** I believe it is important to measure the true amount of carpet to be cleaned, subtracting areas under beds, cabinets, and other furniture that will not be moved.
- **The level of soiling.** Carpets that do not have large amounts of spots will be cleaned faster than carpets that have a lot of spots.

I find it much easier to evaluate the job and give an accurate quote before the day of the job, so there is no pressure and the proper expectations are set and able to be met.

7. Your carpet gets dirtier quicker after every carpet cleaning.

This can be true if the person cleaning your carpet does not properly rinse your carpet. If there are cleaning agents left in the carpet, it would be just like washing your hands with soap, but not rinsing them off after scrubbing. Yes, your hands are clean now, but all the dirt that you encounter the rest of the day is attracted to your soapy hands. It will not take long for your hands to get gross. It is imperative to rinse the carpet well so that your carpet returns to its natural state.

8. Carpet Protector is not important, it is just *an add on sale* to make carpet cleaners more money.

Unfortunately, this belief is perpetuated by the fact that some carpet cleaners try to pressure customers into adding it on during the cleaning process. I prefer to have carpet protector as part of the process, because it is an important part. When carpet is manufactured, carpet protector is applied to your carpet, but it does wear off over time due to wear and tear. Re-applying carpet protector after cleaning is important because:

- It makes the carpet fibers more resistant to soil, minimizing the amount of wear that shows in your carpets.
- It allows you more time to clean up spills, so they do not become permanent stains.
- It makes vacuuming more effective, because the dirt and contaminants in your carpet are less likely to stick to the carpet.

9. Hot water damages your carpet.

Some people think that hot water damages your carpet, but that is just not true. The truth is that technicians who do not know how to operate the carpet cleaning machines properly damage carpet, but hot water leaves your carpet more sanitary than cold water or non-rinsing methods of carpet cleaning ever would.

Which Carpet Cleaning Method is the Best?

There are several different methods that are commonly used to clean carpets today. I believe that there is a time and a place for every method of carpet cleaning, but hot water extraction stands out as the most effective to making your home a healthier place to live. The cleaning methods that I will tell you about are: Dry Foam, Absorbent Pad (Bonnet Cleaning), Dry-Absorbent Powder, Hot Water Extraction with a portable extractor, and Hot Water Extraction with a truck mounted unit.

Dry Foam: This method generally uses an encapsulation cleaning agent that is applied to your carpet with a scrubbing machine that produces foam. Once the foam has been applied and dries, it is vacuumed off with a vacuum cleaner. Encapsulant cleaners crystallize the soil that it comes into contact with, and adds a protective layer to the carpet fibers that works like an onion peel where dirt flakes off through normal vacuum cleaning. This method does work to get rid of many dirt and soils, but without the use of hot water and full extraction it does not sanitize carpet. This method is more of a maintenance cleaning method to be used in commercial applications and in between hot water extraction cleanings.

Absorbent Pad (Bonnet Cleaning): This method is very similar to the Dry Foam Cleaning method. Instead of brushes, this method uses an absorbent pad or cotton bonnet attached to a floor polishing buffer machine which 'buffs' the carpet. The buffing motion of the machine causes the bonnet to absorb dirt from your carpet. This method is also best used to maintain an acceptable appearance for your carpet in between hot water extraction cleanings and in commercial applications.

Dry, Absorbent Powder: In this method, a moist, absorbent powder is spread on your carpet, and brushed into the base of the carpet yarns. Once the powder has been allowed time to set up, it is vacuumed up. Once again, with the absence of a rinsing agent, this is not a highly effective way to clean the carpet in your home.

Hot Water Extraction: This method is the only method that uses all of the elements of the CHAT cleaning method. CHAT stands for **C**leaning **A**gent, **H**eat, **A**gitation, and **T**ime.

- The cleaning agent is forced into the carpet under high pressure.
- The water that is being used to rinse the carpet is heated to the point of steam and is the most sanitary ways of cleaning.
- The cleaning agent is agitated into the carpet with a brush which ensures proper coverage of the cleaning agent.
- Pre-spraying the cleaning agent on the carpet allows the proper dwell time, so that dirt, soil, and other contaminants can be broken down by the cleaning agent.

Hot water extraction is the only method that is recognized by many carpet mills to ensure a carpet maintains the manufacturer's warranty. According to a technical bulletin by Shaw Industries, the world's largest carpet manufacturer, "the hot water extraction system, which research indicates, provides the best capability for cleaning"

<http://www.shawfloors.com/cms/Articles.aspx?DN=1129,1112,1106,29,4,Documents#>

There are two different ways to provide hot water extraction: truck mounted and portable. The truck mounted extraction is done by a large machine that is mounted to a truck outside of the facility with only the hoses and a wand brought inside. Portable extraction units are small units that are wheeled into the facility and plugged into standard outlets.

Truck mounted units are much more effective due to the fact that the water is heated to a higher temperature, the water pressure is able to be set higher and the vacuum power is much higher. This method, without question, is the most powerful cleaning method and the most effective way to remove dirt, soil, bacteria, pollutants, and other contaminants from your carpet.

6 Mistakes to Avoid When Choosing a Carpet Cleaner

Mistake #1: Choosing a carpet cleaner by equipment only.

It is very important to have the proper equipment when cleaning carpet, which is why we have invested over a hundred thousand dollars in equipment. However, not all technicians are created equally. It is equally important to have the people using the equipment properly trained on the equipment. The finest machines in the world are just heavy, expensive paperweights without professionally trained technicians operating them.

Mistake #2: Choosing a carpet cleaner based on price alone.

Price is a very important piece of any buying decision that is to be made. We all have a budget that we need to operate under. Unfortunately, price alone may get you into a situation that nobody wants to be in. Without the proper training, insurances, equipment, cleaning agents and other overhead that is maintained by professional cleaning companies you and your carpets may be worse after cleaning than they were before they were cleaned.

Mistake #3: Choosing a carpet cleaner based on one phone call.

Speaking to someone on the telephone can definitely reveal insights into the character and principles of a company, but I would suggest having the carpet cleaner into your home to give you a quote. If you receive a quote ahead of the work to be done, and ask for an accurate, comprehensive quote, then you can find out exactly what the carpet cleaner recommends for your carpets. Also, this will help assure that you will not be 'pressured' to buy a bunch of additional services when the technician comes out to complete the work.

Mistake #4: Choosing a carpet cleaner without a money back guarantee.

I personally feel that it is essential for carpet cleaners to guarantee their work! What can show more confidence in an experienced technician's workmanship than a money back guarantee? Not all carpet cleaners offer a guarantee, and if they do, it is 'limited'. If a client is not satisfied with the work that was performed, then they shouldn't have to pay until the work is brought to a level that makes all parties involved happy.

Mistake #5: Choosing a carpet cleaner without recommendations from other clients.

Testimonials supplied by clients are one of the best ways to learn about a carpet cleaning company. If a carpet cleaning company supplies good service and results, they will have lots of customers that would be willing to tell about the good experiences they have had with that company. Ask your service provider for some testimonials, if they are hesitant to supply them, there may be a good reason for it.

Mistake #6: Choosing a carpet cleaner who doesn't use truck mounted hot water extraction.

Even if you are having a maintenance cleaning, which does not require hot water extraction, I would not use a company that does not offer hot water extraction as an option. Hot water extraction with a truck mounted unit is what carpet manufacturers recommend using to have your carpets cleaned. Also, hot water extraction provides the best and healthiest cleaning system available, a carpet cleaner that does not offer it, just does not show the commitment to excellence that I would expect.

VALUE vs. PRICE

Everyone has heard the old saying, “You get what you pay for”. There is a lot of truth in that statement, especially when you are talking about the lower scale of the spectrum. I do believe, however, that in the day in age where we live, it is increasingly more important to RECEIVE MORE VALUE than you pay for.

Price is the amount of **money** that is **charged**, while value is the amount of **service** that you **receive**.

It should be the goal of every carpet cleaner to provide much more value than the price that is received. It is obvious that the most important thing a client is paying for is clean carpet, but what are some of the things that may not be as obvious?

The little things. You have heard the saying, “God is in the detail”, I agree. The details are often the most difficult to perform, but they are generally the best and easiest way to be set yourself apart from the other guys. Does your carpet cleaner use corner guards to protect your door frames from scratching? Does your carpet cleaner groom your carpet when finished to remove the wand marks from the carpet? Does your carpet cleaner put protective tabs and blocks under the furniture, so your furniture doesn’t get water damaged from the carpet cleaning? Does your carpet cleaner call you on the way to the job to make sure you know when the technician will be arriving? These are all little things that individually do not seem that important, but they are the things that can be the difference between having a satisfied and happy client.

A customized carpet cleaning plan. Every home, no matter the size or income, has a budget that they must operate in. While it is not always possible to meet a client’s budget, it should be the goal of every carpet cleaner to come within that budget. There are different ways to do that, but the easiest is to provide a customized plan that will allow the client to spread the cost out, while still allowing them to have the cleanest, healthiest home possible.

An extensive network of referral partners. I believe it is important for all carpet cleaners to get out there and network with other home service professionals in the area. I want to know the best electrician, plumber, realtor, handyman, flooring installer, and landscaper in the area to help my clients succeed. One of the best ways to help a client is by giving them a referral for the most dependable service provider for their every need.

Providing more value than price should be the goal of every carpet cleaner. If you feel like you are ‘getting what you pay for’, it may be time to re-evaluate the carpet cleaner that you have in your home.

SO, What Now?

Step #1: Make the commitment to have your carpets cleaned. The longer you wait, the more allergens, dust, pollen, and other contaminants are invading your living area. In addition to the unhealthy living conditions, the contaminants in your carpet will cause premature wear of the fibers, causing you to have to replace the carpet sooner. If you do not make the commitment, prepare to deal with the UGLY.

Step #2: Decide which method of carpet cleaning meets your requirements. Do you want the cleanest and healthiest carpet cleaning method that is attained through truck mounted hot water extraction? As we have discussed in earlier pages, it is definitely the most effective way to have your carpets cleaned. If you have other goals, be prepared to discuss those goals with your carpet cleaner, so that a customized plan can be reached.

Step #3: List the questions that you want a carpet cleaner to answer for you.

- a. Which method of carpet cleaning do you recommend?
- b. What kind of equipment do you use to clean carpet?
- c. What kind of cleaning agents do you use to clean carpet?
- d. What kind of training have you received in carpet cleaning?
- e. Do you guarantee your work?
- f. What kind of value do you add to your services that others do not?

Step #4: Make the call. Go ahead and call the company that you feel will do an excellent job cleaning your carpets. I would suggest inviting the company representative to your home and ask for a detailed, specific quotation in writing that includes everything they recommend to clean your carpet.

Thank you for reviewing the Consumer's Guide to Carpet Cleaning. I trust that you have found this information to be helpful. Education is the best way to make a good decision. If you have any questions after reading this information, feel free to give me a call anytime on my cell phone: (513) 673-0740 or at the office (513) 549-2099. Stay tuned to www.fresh-floors.com for further educational opportunities that we will be presenting.

Thank you,

Stephen Knox

This is my six year son, Brady's contribution to the Consumer's Guide to Carpet Cleaning. I know that I have the makings of a great copywriter on my hands! I can't wait to retire on the income he will generate!!! - Stephen

Dear Customer
I AM BRADY
MY Dad
WORKS AT
Fresh Floors
Fresh Floors
are the Best
they clean your
carpet very good
call 673-0740
to make a appointment
BRADY

Dear Fresh Floors,

I don't typically get excited over carpet cleaning however; I was very impressed with your work. Although we have had our carpets cleaned many times before, our nearly white carpet in the family room has never looked this good! I'm sure that you receive compliments all of the time, but I wanted to put mine in writing so that I can share your business with others. With your permission, I would like to advertise your company in my next newsletter. Since the holidays are now upon us, many of my readers may also be considering having someone clean their carpets. I'm sure that once they try your service, they won't be calling those "other guys" anymore. ~smiling~

Thanks again for your excellent service and for working around my busy schedule. I also appreciate that you were willing to move my heavy sofa out of the way! You guys were wonderful and I'm certain that you will be getting more of my business in the future.

Sincerely,

Denise Fuqua