

Seven Things You Must Know Before Hiring a Carpet Cleaning Company

Introduction

Carpet can be one of the nicest, or nastiest parts of your home. If you have clean, quality carpet, you'll love walking on it, playing on it with your children or pets, and maybe even having indoor picnics on it.

But if your carpet is nasty, full of dirt, food, pet stains and other scary things, you may not even walk on it yourself, let alone your small children!

That's why regular, thorough carpet cleaning is so important. Not only does it help keep your family healthier, but it also just lets you enjoy your home more! And since your home is probably the largest asset you have, don't you want to enjoy it?

If your carpet has seen better days and you don't want to completely replace it, a good cleaning is the best thing you can do. Even though selecting the best method and contractor may seem daunting, it doesn't have to be too difficult. By the end of this report, you'll feel much more comfortable talking to different contractors to decide the best service for your needs, as well as the questions to ask, why you shouldn't clean the carpets yourself, and a lot more!

Let's start by helping you select the best company for your needs.

How do I Find the Best Carpet Cleaning Service for My Needs?

Carpet cleaning isn't cheap. Since you'll be paying at least a few hundred dollars, don't you want to make sure the job is done right?

Even though methods and tools are important, the *most* important thing to worry about is selecting the right company for the job. Once you do that, the rest will just fall into place.

Generally there are 3 main ways to find local carpet cleaning services. Even though you don't need to use all three, it definitely couldn't hurt!

Method #1: Referrals

Word-of-mouth advertising will never go out of style. Whether you're looking for advice on clothes, a grocery store or a carpet cleaning service, asking friends and family is a good place to start.

The best people to ask are those who have had their carpets cleaned fairly recently. Someone who hasn't done it for 5 years may recommend a company that isn't as good as it used to be! Things can change drastically in a few years' time, so make sure you get recent, accurate information.

Just keep in mind that the person who you ask may have some kind of bias. For example, if someone recommends their friend's company, it may not be because the company is good! Likewise, if the person you ask is very easy to please and just likes everyone, they may not be the best judge of character or service.

All you're trying to do here is get at least 2-3 good recommendations. If you can't find that many, you can always use the other methods.

Method #2: Customer Review Sites

The internet has changed forever how we conduct business. Specifically, sites like Yelp, Angie's List and search engines like Google make finding good contractors super easy.

The good thing about these sites is that since the reviews come from previous customers, you get a feel for how the company treated your neighbors. If all of the reviews are glowing and say that the service was excellent, there's a good chance you'll enjoy the experience as well.

And if most of the reviews are from dissatisfied customers? That's a good sign to stay away, because what's to keep the contractor from treating you the same way?

That said, take these reviews with a grain of salt. Typically the only people who post reviews online are those who either loved or hated the service. There may be dozens or hundreds of customers who were perfectly happy but never posted a review.

Also, if the reviews span a few years of time, just focus on those that have been posted in the last year. As mentioned earlier, things change and sometimes companies perform better (or worse) service over

time.

Method #3: Phonebooks

Yes, these do still exist. Even though you're probably more likely to just use their websites like yellowpages.com, you do have this option.

The primary downside to using phonebooks is that you have no idea what customers think of the company. Even though this may not be a big deal if you just want one room cleaned, but if you're having most of your house's carpet cleaned, this probably isn't the best way to go.

Selecting the Best Service

Once you've identified a few good services, here are a few things you can do to help make the final decision:

Get Quotes - Budget is important to everyone, and this can make or break which company you go with.

Check out the BBB - Does the company have a great rating from the Better Business Bureau?

Friendliness - When you call the company to ask questions, how did they respond? Were they friendly and happy to help, or did they seem rushed, bothered and like they didn't want to talk to you?

Experience - Being in business for a long time isn't required, but it sure helps! Even though carpet cleaning isn't rocket science, you want to make sure you hire someone who knows what they're doing.

Guarantees - Your carpet is either clean or it's not. Ask what kind of guarantees a company can offer you. If they don't have one at all, that's a warning sign!

To Sum it Up...

The more research you do, the better. Just make sure you're comparing apples to apples, don't take the lowest price *just* because it's the lowest, and don't go with a company that makes you feel uncomfortable or ripped off in any way!

What are the Different Carpet Cleaning Methods?

There are several different ways to clean carpet. Most companies specialize in just one or two methods, so having an idea of which you prefer is a good idea. This will help you to narrow down which service you want to work with.

#1: Dry Cleaning

This method uses carpet absorbent cleaners to clean your carpet. It's called "dry cleaning" because no water is used in the process.

The idea is that a dry compound is rubbed into the carpet to attract and absorb the soil in the carpet. If your carpet is heavily soiled, sometimes a detergent pre-spray is applied to help loosen up the dirt.

Once the compound has sat and absorbed the soil, it is simply vacuumed up. Since there is no water used, there is zero wait time for the carpet to dry. The ease of this method makes many companies and people use this as a regular maintenance type of cleaning.

There are a few disadvantages to this method though. The first one is that if it's not completely vacuumed up, it can get into the air on and your shoes or socks. Another is that it doesn't kill bacteria and other nasty stuff living in the carpet- it mainly just picks up soil.

#2: Carbonated Cleaning, or the Bonnet Method

This method essentially just uses a rotating or oscillating brush that drives pads into your carpet. These pads can be wet, damp or dry, and they pick up dirt and soil as they're driven into the carpet.

The largest carpet manufacturer in the world, Shaw Industries, recommends that this method NOT be used. It can cause damage to the carpet and also tends to just move soil around instead of clean the carpet. Even if it picks up some dirt, it tends to get driven into other parts of carpet later on.

Some companies use this method, saying that the other methods will destroy or damage carpet. Even though that's not completely true, it's a scare tactic that they sometimes use to convince you to go with this method.

#3: Shampoo

A lot of carpet cleaning companies use some kind of shampoo to clean carpets. The advantage of shampoo is that it helps kill the bacteria and nastiness living in your carpet, as well as picks up (some) soil.

It works by creating a lot of foam inside the carpet. When this foam dries, it leaves a residue that attracts soil and dirt. Once the carpet dries, you vacuum the carpet to pick up residue and the dirt with it.

The primary problem with shampoo is that many times the residue is sticky and doesn't get vacuumed up well. If the residue isn't picked up then neither is the dirt, causing re-soiling to occur.

How do companies make up for basically burying the dirt deep into the carpet? Sometimes they have optical brighteners, which make the carpet look cleaner than it really is. Over time, these optical brighteners make the carpet a shade of yellow, and this stain can't be removed.

#4: Steam Cleaning, or Water Extraction

Many companies swear by this method, saying that it's the best overall way to clean your carpet. It's also the method most recommended by carpet manufacturers, saying it extends the life of the carpet and won't damage the fibers.

Water extraction also has the ability to deep clean carpet, whereas the other methods are better suited for a surface-level cleaning.

How does it work? Basically a fine stream of water (or water+detergent) is sprayed into the carpet, loosening up dirt. A vacuum immediately sucks up the water and dirt, as this is when it's most loose and easy to pick up.

Most companies do this from their truck that remains parked outside. This helps keep the dirty air and humidity exhausted by the system outside of the home, which is a good thing for you.

There are various types of equipment- some make the water boiling hot, others keep it cold. While very hot water cleans the carpet better, the disadvantage is that extremely hot water can damage the carpet.

So What's the Best Method?

Each has its own advantages and disadvantages. Even though many people would say that water extraction is the best, some companies will tell you otherwise because of X, Y or Z.

At the end of the day, the decision is up to you. Do you want more of a surface-level cleaning, which will also be less expensive? If so, the first few options are just fine. But if you want to get down to the deep soil, you'll have to use water extraction.

How do I Find the Best Deal on Carpet Cleaning?

Part of finding the best deal comes from doing your homework regarding what method of carpet cleaning you'd like and which companies you want to work for.

Discounts

Carpet cleaning companies sometimes have special deals for new customers or during slow times of the year, so be sure to ask when you start talking to them on the phone.

Something else to keep in mind is that if you have multiple rooms done at once, the companies should be able to offer you some kind of discount. It's a lot easier for them to do a whole house at once than just do 1-2 rooms here, another 2 rooms there.

One thing that many consumers don't realize is that when you pay a company with a credit card, that company loses 3-8% of the sale to the credit card company. Ask if you can get a small discount if you pay with cash. You may be surprised!

Clarity

Once you start receiving quotes from contractors, make sure the quotes are in writing and broken out. It's a lot easier to compare one company to another if you see their costs broken out. One company might charge more for labor, while another may charge a bit more for the setup/cleanup.

Having clarity regarding costs also helps you ask intelligent questions. If a cost seems out of place, don't be afraid to ask what it's paying for.

Double Check that Satisfaction Policy

Saving money on your carpet cleaning is great, but not if you're unhappy with the results! Make sure the company you hire has a satisfaction guarantee. Make sure to get the guarantee in writing too- just to be on the safe side.

Inexpensive is Good -- Cheap is Bad

The final thing to keep in mind is that when you get multiple quotes, some may be dramatically lower than the competition. Even though this may seem great at the time, it can also be a warning sign for a low quality service!

If a price just seems too good to be true, it probably is. We realize that you like saving money, but if an ounce of money saved causes a pound of frustration, is it really worth it?

Should I Clean the Carpets Myself, or Hire a Pro?

Even though it's pretty easy and inexpensive to rent a carpet cleaning machine yourself, we recommend that you hire a professional to do this dirty work for you.

Here's why.

Reason #1: Opportunity Cost

If you remember from high school economics, opportunity cost is what you pay to do one activity instead of another. In this case, you're using your valuable time to clean carpet instead of work.

How valuable is your time? If you make the national average of about \$46K, that means you make \$23 an hour.

When you rent a carpet cleaning machine, first you end up paying about \$20 for the day. Then if it takes you say 6 hours of work, you basically cost yourself \$138 that you would've made while working.

Considering that the same amount of work from a professional may have only cost you \$180, you're not saving much money in the long run.

Something else to keep in mind is that even if you don't work, there are other things you'd rather do with your time than clean carpets, right? Hiring a pro gives you more time with your family, have fun with hobbies, or work on other projects you enjoy more.

Reason #2: Cleanliness Guarantee

When you clean carpets yourself, who do you complain to when they don't get as clean as you were expecting?

Yourself of course.

But when you hire someone to do it for you, it's the professional's responsibility to make sure you're happy. If you aren't, they will work with you to figure out how to fix the situation.

Plus, keep in mind that professionals do this day in, day out. They know the tricks of the trade, and will most likely do a much better job than you can!

Reason #3: Sanitation

When you rent a carpet cleaning machine, you have no idea the last place it may have been used. If it was a home filled with cat hair and you're allergic to cats... you may be in for a bad day.

The problem with rental equipment is that you can't be sure if anyone cleaned it after its last use....or the one before that, or the one before that.

On the other hand, professional carpet cleaners make sanitation a top priority. They realize the dangers of not keeping their equipment clean, so they strive to sanitize and clean their tools after each job. This ensures that residue isn't transferred from home to home.

What about Potential Damage to my Carpets or Furniture?

As we discussed in the section about different methods, some types of carpet cleaning are more potentially damaging than others.

For example, the bonnet method is likely to cause damage to your carpets, especially if you do it over and over again. Carpet manufacturers actually recommend not using this method, since it's so likely to cause damage.

The other methods are less invasive, but may still cause some damage if done incorrectly. For example, steam cleaning can damage the fibers if the water is too hot.

In the long run, as long as the method of carpet cleaning is done correctly, it shouldn't cause much damage. In fact, regular carpet cleaning usually extends the life of a carpet, so you'll save money in the long run with regular cleanings.

Regarding furniture - if you move it out of the way, it's very unlikely to get damaged. That said, if someone is being careless or if the furniture isn't moved out of the way, it may get damaged if a detergent, compound or very hot steam hits it.

This shouldn't happen if you have professionals perform the work though. They know how to be careful, and if it happens that the furniture can't be moved into the next room, they'll be extra careful while cleaning the carpets around the furniture.

The bottom line is that you shouldn't worry about it. If you want to put your mind at ease, ask the contractor about their policy regarding furniture or carpet damaged by their service.

What do I Need to do to Prepare to have My Carpets Cleaned?

There are a lot of things you can do to get ready for your carpet cleaners. Here are the main things to do:

- Vacuum the carpet thoroughly
- Clear the driveway of cars, toys, bikes, etc.
- Pin up any curtains or drapes that reach the floor
- Remove as much furniture as possible from the room(s)
- Watch your children and pets
- Put breakable items in a very safe place
- Let the technicians know about any loose or fragile furniture

You don't need to do these things... but if you don't it will make like harder for both yourself and the carpet cleaners.

Once the carpet is clean, here are a few things to keep in mind/do:

1. Turn on all ceiling fans in the home, making sure the air is blowing down
2. Set your thermostat's fan setting to "On"
3. Turn off your furnace's humidifier
4. Turn on any floor fans and run them over the damp carpet
5. Open windows or set the air condition to about 72 degrees
6. Don't replace the furniture or rugs in the cleaned room for at least 24 hours

Finally, do your best to avoid walking on the damp carpet. Wet carpet picks up dirt from your shoes, socks or even feet VERY easily.

If you do have to walk on the carpet, wear clean, indoor shoes or clean white socks.

Other Important Questions to Ask about Carpet Cleaning Services

We've already discussed a few of these, but here's a list of questions to ask carpet cleaning companies to help you select the best one.

If you think of anything else, don't be afraid to ask them!

Do you offer written estimates?

Is your system mounted on a truck?

Are your technicians IICRC Certified? (IICRC is the Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration Certification)

Are you a member of Ethical Services?

Are your technicians insured?

Can you provide references from previous clients?

What method do you use?

Do you have a written satisfaction guarantee?

How long have you been in business?

Do you subcontract out the work, or do you use your own technicians?

How long will it take the carpet to dry or be ready for use?

How do you deal with particularly bad stains?

Conclusion

Cleaning your carpets will go a long way towards extending the life of your carpet and just keeping you happier. Who wants to walk or play on nasty, dirty carpet? Not you, not your little ones and definitely not your guests!

The thing to keep in mind with carpet cleaning- just like any other work around the home- is to do your research. Don't hire the first company you find just because you want it done soon. It's generally better to ask the right questions, figure out your budget and decide on what you really need before you make your selection.

Thanks for reading, and please let us know if you have any questions or comments!