

Carpet Cleaner Hiring Guide

Everything You MUST Know Before Hiring a Carpet Cleaner!

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Introduction

If your home has carpet, then odds are you will be looking for a carpet cleaning company at some point or another. Carpets serve as walkways for people and pets and unfortunately carpet cleaning is a necessary part of life. Accidents and stains are also a part of life, especially if you have children or pets. Many specific brands or types of carpet will require periodic cleaning in order to maintain the warranty and appearance of the carpet.

On the flip side getting your carpets cleaned could have a number of positive effects for you. Your home will look better when the carpets are cleaner and spots and stains are removed. Cleaning the carpet also removes odours that are trapped in the fibers, which can help your home to smell fresh and clean. It can also reduce allergy producing dusts and hair in carpets.

In some circumstances you may be able to clean your carpets by yourself. There are many high quality carpet cleaning products and machines available for rent or purchase. Other times you just need to have your carpets cleaned by a professional. This could be the case if you have a large floor space, very bad stains or specific kinds of carpet made from certain materials. A professional carpet cleaning company has the machines, the chemicals and the knowledge to make sure your carpets are their cleanest.

Choosing a carpet cleaning company is a big decision. After all, these people will be coming into your home and working on your carpets, which you have invested a good deal of money in. If you don't choose a high quality carpet cleaning business, then you end up making your dirty carpet situation much worse. You also have to think about your home's safety and your budget before deciding.

This report will tell you everything you *must* know before you hire a professional carpet cleaning company. By being informed about how to make the best possible decision on a carpet cleaning company you stand the best chance of getting the job done correctly and for the right price.



Finding a Cleaner

The first step to finding a carpet cleaning company is to determine what kind of service you need or want. There are several different types of carpet cleaning processes available and not all companies are equipped to perform them all. There are also several different types of chemical cleaning systems, which can be both wet and dry. Choosing what kind of service you would like to have done will depend on several factors. These factors can include:

- What type of carpet and rug material you have.
- Specific restrictions due to carpet and rug warranties
- The amount of cleaning that needs to be performed, including how bad your stains are.
- If you want to use commercial-grade or brand-name cleaning products or if you want to go with the generic cleaning brands.
- The size of your house and how many rooms need to be cleaned.
- How much time you have to complete your cleaning project.
- How much you are willing to spend.

Carpet Cleaning Methods

In order to know what you are looking for you should be aware of some of the different techniques and methods that professionals use to clean carpets. The following is a brief outline of some of the most common carpet cleaning methods used by professionals so that you can understand a little more about how the process works and make a better decision.

- **Carpet Shampooing**

Carpet shampooing uses foam to attract dirt and other residue from the carpet fibers. The idea is to spread the foam, allow it to dry and then remove it and the dirt residue, leaving the carpet cleaner. Not all carpet shampoos are created equal however. If a shampoo leaves a sticky residue behind it could end up attracting more grime to the carpets. Most carpet shampoos are not great detergents, meaning that they cover up dirt more than removing it. Some contain a brightener that changes how light reacts with the carpet, making it appear to be cleaner. This brightener can eventually turn to a yellow color.

Carpet shampoo is generally applied by a cylindrical foam machine, which uses compressed air and rotating brushes to apply foam to the carpet, or by a rotary machine, which sprays the foam directly onto the carpet and then uses a brush to agitate the fibers. The carpet shampooing method is less effective than some other forms of carpet cleaning techniques, and because brushes are often used to agitate the fibers damage to the carpet can result.

- **Carpet Absorbent Cleaners**

Also known as dry cleaning, absorbent cleaners use virtually no water to clean carpet fibers. The cleaners are a dry powder that contains some water, a detergent, an absorbent carrier (which can be organic or composed of polymers) and a form of solvent. The powder is agitated into the carpet's fibers where it attracts and absorbs dirt, and then it is vacuumed up. Proper vacuuming is required to make sure that all of the powder is removed.

- **Carbonated Cleaning**

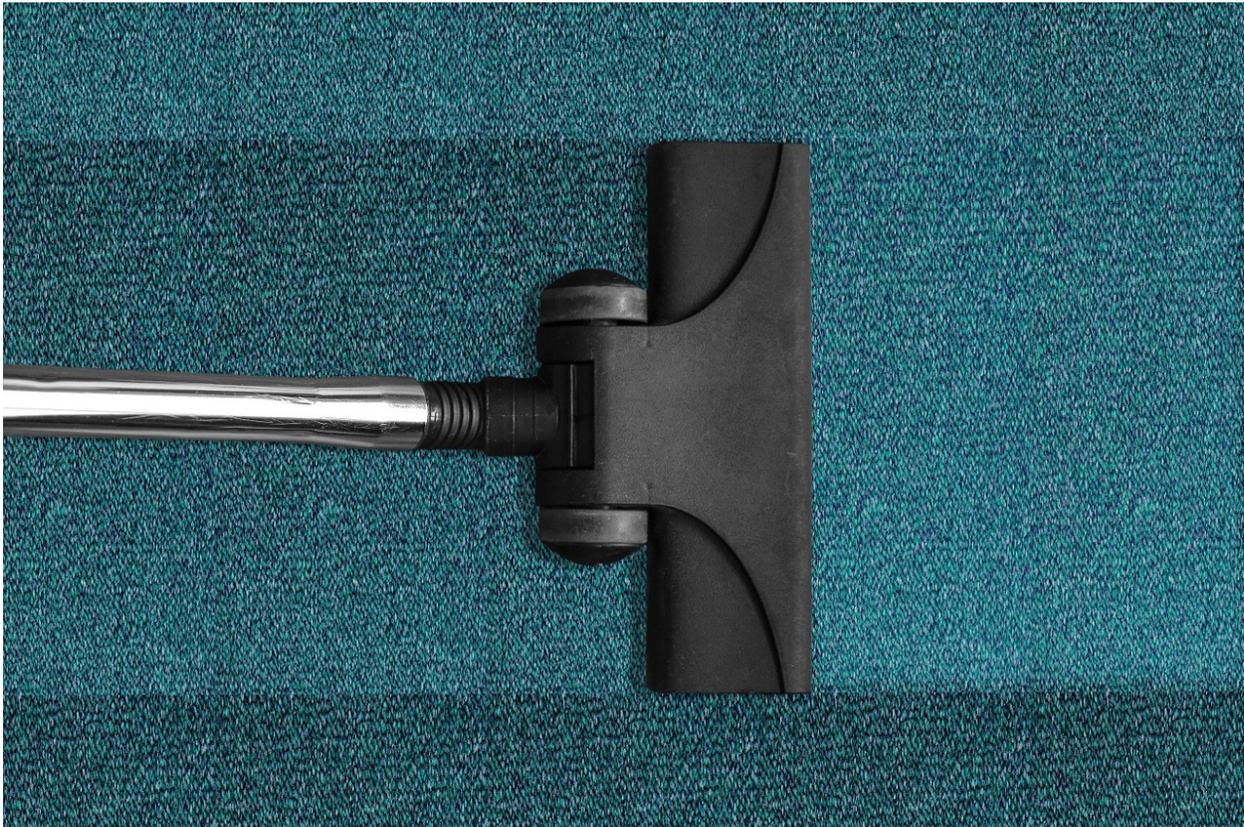
Carbonated cleaning uses a rotary brush or cleaning pads to spray water and cleaning solution on the carpet, where the brushes can scrub the fibers. This

method is not recommended because it doesn't actually remove dirt particles from the carpet and the spinning apparatus of the machine is likely to damage the carpet's fibers. Many carpet manufacturers recommend against this method as well.

- **Extraction Method**

The extraction method, sometimes called steam cleaning, is recommended by many manufacturers. The method uses warm water, in some cases actual steam, which is sprayed on the carpet to remove dirt particles. Then the wet and dirty water is immediately vacuumed up. This process can be performed using a small handheld machine or a large truck-mounted apparatus. Truck mounted systems are better because they keep any exhaust fumes out of the house.

There are a number of different agents, solutions and chemicals that can be used by professional carpet cleaning companies. Each has its own advantages and disadvantages. Determining what specific cleaners your carpet cleaning company will be using and how they will affect your carpet is something that you will want to find out as you continue with your choosing process.



The next step, once you have determined exactly what type of service you are looking for, is to come up with a short list of potential companies. There are several ways that you can locate carpet cleaning companies in your area. The yellow pages are a good place to look, as are online Google searches of businesses in your area. You can also ask friends and family members if they have ever used a carpet cleaning company before. Locating a number of carpet cleaning companies in your area is the easy part. Choosing the best candidate for you is a bit trickier.

While you are creating your short-list of local companies you should take the time to perform a little bit of research on them as well. The best source of information on how reputable a company is and how good of a job they can do is direct references from trusted sources. This means your friends and family. If they have ever used such a service then they will be able to tell you exactly how satisfied they were with it and if the price was good. You will also be able to trust them if they say anything negative about the company.

The next best place to locate references for local companies is the Better Business Bureau or Chamber of Commerce. Their website will let you see if a specific company has any disputes or claims filed against it and if their reputation is good. There are many online referral sites that focus on local companies as well. A good example of one of these is Angie's List.com. These sites allow people to review companies they have used and either recommend or not recommend the service to others.

Once you have done a little homework and have short-listed the top 3 or 4 carpet cleaning companies, the next step is to briefly interview each company. You can e-mail them, call them up, or stop into their office. A reputable company will have a salesman or manager who is willing to sit down with you and answer your questions. Some companies may even visit your home and provide you with a consultation. By asking a few specific questions you will be better able to gauge the company and what type of job they are likely to perform for you.

Potential Problems

There are many reasons why you should do your homework before you choose a professional carpet cleaning service. Recently there has been a proliferation in the market of small and poorly run carpet cleaning businesses. This is because commercial-grade carpet cleaning machines have become increasingly available for cheaper prices.

This means that just about anyone can now afford a 'so-called' professional-grade carpet cleaning machine and that anyone can claim to be a carpet cleaning business. These low grade businesses can be under-insured or not insured at all, meaning any damage they do to your home could be left on you. Cheaper types of professional carpet cleaning machines are also usually only slightly more effective than machines that you can rent.

There is also the risk of damage to your carpets because the 'technician' didn't use the machine correctly or added an inaccurate dilution of chemicals onto your carpet. Many oscillating or rotary brush-based machines can damage the fibers of specific types of carpet. There are also safety concerns because strangers will be in and around your home. Overall your chances of getting a quality carpet cleaning job is less if you hire a lower grade of carpet cleaning professional.

Questions to Ask a Carpet Cleaner

The best way to gauge the professionalism and skill level of a carpet cleaning business is to perform an interview. Not only will you be able to derive information directly from their answers, but you can also determine a lot about them from how they answer your questions. This gives you the ability to search for certain warning signs as well. Here are some questions that you should ask any carpet cleaning business before you think of hiring them:

A. How long has your company been in business? How long has your business operated in this area?

While the amount of time that a business has been operating is not necessarily a clear indicator of its quality, you can tell a lot from how long a business has been operating. In general, businesses with poor service records and low customer satisfaction rates do not stay in business for a long time or in the same location for a long period of time.

This means that a business that has been operating in the same location for a long time probably will do a decent job. You should not however, discount hiring a newer business if you find their other aspects to be positive.

B. Can you provide references?

Unless they are brand new, a reputable carpet cleaning company should be able to provide you with at least a few references from satisfied customers.

C. Does your company require that its employees and managers receive any form of formal training? Do you perform background checks?

This answer to this question will show you how dedicated and possibly how qualified a carpet cleaning business is. Reputable companies make an effort to continuously educate their employees through recognized national cleaning

companies or other industry specific organizations. Having formal training also means that the employees will better understand how to operate the equipment and do the best possible job. Performing employee background checks may not be 100% necessary, but it is good to know who will be coming into your home.

D. What types of cleaning methods and equipment will you be using? What kinds of chemicals do you use?

Cleaning methods for carpets can differ according to rug types and installation. Some brands of carpets will have certain restrictions placed on the chemicals that can be used to clean them in order to avoid warranty issues. A high quality carpet cleaning business should be able to discuss with you the best methods and equipment types for your specific situation. They should know how to properly disperse chemicals, especially warranty specific chemicals such as ScotchGuard. You also want to be sure that all chemicals being used are safe. The more knowledge they have the better.

E. How much does your company charge per square foot? What are the different service types and their respective costs? Do you provide a written estimate?

A carpet cleaning company should charge you by the square foot. You should be wary of a company that offers a set price for a room or rooms, because all rooms are different. The company's square foot price list should be easily presented and quantified. You should know exactly what you will be paying for what type of service. Knowing this allows you to compare the prices per square foot of several different companies to find the best price. Be aware that pre-spot treatments and furniture moving services should be included in the square foot price. Also, you will want to receive a written copy of the cleaner's estimate.

F. Is your company insured for loss and damage to my home? How much coverage do you have? Are you licensed and bonded?

You should always ask to see proof of insurance before you allow a company to begin working on your home. Because of the nature of carpet cleaning (meaning that it involves water, soaps, chemicals, moving furniture, color transfers and large machines) the risk of damage is higher than you may think. If a carpet cleaning company doesn't have enough insurance to cover any damage that may occur you could be left to pay for the damages yourself. Always look for fully insured carpet cleaning companies. Most states also require that businesses be licensed and bonded.

G. Do you offer any form of satisfaction guarantee? What happens if I am not completely satisfied with the work?

A decent company will offer you some form of satisfaction guarantee. Be wary of companies that do not. Make sure that you are aware of what the conditions are for the guarantee and that you understand ahead of time what the company will do if you are not fully satisfied. A money-back guarantee is always a good bet.

H. How many crew members will be coming to my home? Will there be a manager or supervisor with them?

This is a safety question. Carpet cleaning requires that strangers enter your home, so you want to know exactly who will be coming in. You also want to know if there will be a higher-up person with them so that you will have someone to speak with directly if there is a problem.

Things to Be Aware Of

When you are interviewing prospective carpet cleaning businesses there are a few things that you should be aware of. Since prices for commercial grade carpet cleaning machines have dropped recently, un-professional and low-quality businesses have erupted. You can generally spot these lower quality businesses because of certain warning signs. Be wary of a carpet cleaning business that:

- Shows up unannounced at your home.
- Is not IICRC (The Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration) certified or trained.
- Contacts or solicits you over the phone.
- Charges a set price per room.
- Claims to use brand name machines or cleaning products but actually doesn't.
- Does not have proof of insurance.
- Isn't willing to answer your questions or provide references.
- Has a complaint or complaints lodged against them with the Better Business Bureau or a negative review on a customer satisfaction site such as Angie's List.
- Does not have a local office or address. This could mean that they are operating a business from out of state or out of the back of their vehicle. Either way you don't want to hire them.
- Is willing to give you quotes or estimates over the phone without seeing the space.
- Have prices that are simply 'too good to be true'.
- Has a bad reputation or history.
- Offers you a low price but then later tries to pressure you into purchasing add-ons.

- Offers you half of the process only for a low price. A Dual Procedure carpet cleaning technique means to have two steps performed. Be wary of any company that 'baits' you with a low price for part of the cleaning process and then pressures you into switching to the dual service in order to get the job done right but for a higher price. This is a tactic of unethical carpet cleaners.
- Touts unsupported claims. If a business claims their technique is the 'fastest' or the 'best' but doesn't have anything to back it up then you should wonder about them. The 'best' carpet cleaning technique will depend on your specific situation anyway.
- Appears un-trustworthy in any way.

More Tips

While the following characteristics do not necessarily mean that a company will do a decent job, most of the time these characteristics point to a well-managed carpet cleaning business. Here are some things that you may want to look for when interviewing a carpet cleaner:



- Look for cleaners and managers that are well dressed, possibly even in uniforms. This shows that the business cares enough about its reputation to enforce dressing guidelines.
- Look for organization, both with the workers and the manager. Organization shows that they care as well.
- If a carpet cleaner takes special steps (like putting on shoe covers) to protect your home, then they are concerned about potentially damaging homes. This means that not only will they be less likely to damage your home, but that they also probably have some form of guarantee or damage resolution plan.
- If you can locate a carpet cleaning company that offers a 100% money-back guarantee then you may want to consider hiring them.

- Company representatives that come to your home to provide an estimate will probably be able to do a better job than someone who just shows up to start cleaning.
- The more knowledge about products, services, brand names and carpet materials that a business manager possesses, the more likely they will be able to do the best job on your specific carpet.
- If possible take a look at the company's equipment. The better shape that the company's vehicles and cleaning equipment is in, the more money the company spends on maintenance. This is usually a good sign.
- Often reputable or large carpet cleaning companies will offer promotions, sales and coupons. These may reduce the overall price of your cleaning.

How to Choose a Carpet Cleaner



Performing interviews with potential carpet cleaning companies will give you the best possible chance of choosing a reputable company. The answers to your questions will tell you a lot about a specific company and will help you gauge whether or not they will do a quality job on your carpets.

Price should not be your only factor for making a decision. Remember that if you hire a less than reputable company because their prices are cheaper then you may not save money in the long run. If the company doesn't do a good job, leaves stains or marks or at worse, damages your home, then you could end up hiring another company to fix it. This could cost you more money in the long run.

Your decision on which company you choose should be based not only on price, but also on the reputation of the company, their professionalism, their background and the impression that you get from them. Don't discount your personal feelings either. If anything about the company strikes you as odd or makes you feel a certain way, then choose someone else. The safety of your home and family is the most important decision making factor.

Checklist for Choosing a Company

Here is a run-down of the steps you may want to take in order to choose the best possible candidate for your carpet cleaning job:

- ✓ Decide on exactly what type of service you are looking for, depending on your requirements for the type of carpet cleaning you require, the size of your house and your budget. Pay attention to any specific problems such as stains or marks that you may need fixed.
- ✓ Create a short list of potential companies. You can compile this list from recommendations from friends and family or by searching out recommendations and reviews online.
- ✓ Once you have your short list of different carpet cleaning companies you will want to perform a little research to find out if each business has any complaints or negative reviews levied against it. You can also compare how other customers rated previous jobs performed by the company.
- ✓ Now that you have a short list of viable companies with positive reviews it is time to set up some interviews. Whether you visit them or they come to you (which is preferred) now is the time to run through your list of questions and review the answers that you get.
- ✓ Once your interviews are completed you can decide on which company you will be hiring. Your decision should be based on a number of factors, including but not limited to price.
- ✓ Choose the carpet cleaning company that you feel will do the best job for you at the best price and inform the company that you will be hiring them.
- ✓ Secure a written contract before anyone from the company begins working on your home. This written contract should contain everything that the company will be doing at your home, including any extra or specific jobs. It should also name an agreed upon price for the job. Carefully review your written estimate and ask

questions if necessary. Make sure that everything that you require (including spot removal, special instructions and specific cleaning processes) is included in the contract. Double check the list of procedures that are to be performed and make sure that you are not being charged for any 'extras' that you have not agreed to. This could include things like moving furniture, preconditioning or triple processes. Ask questions about any charges, terms or procedures that you are not sure of. The point is to be fully confident that you understand exactly what will be done and exactly how much it will cost before anyone steps foot into your home. Once you feel confident that the job will be performed to your satisfaction you can sign the agreement.

- ✓ Now you can set-up an appointment to get your carpets cleaned with your chosen company.

What to Expect Before and After Your Cleaner Comes

To make the entire carpet cleaning process move as quickly and easily as possible there are a few steps that you can take. First, on the day that the cleaners are set to arrive, clear them a path through the house and give them a place to park their vehicles. You can ask them in advance how much space they may need for their equipment. This will save you the time and hassle of arranging things after they arrive. You will also want to know how long the drying process will take if the carpet is getting wet. This way you can plan how long you have to be out of certain rooms.

Next you should make sure that everything (toys, dogs and children) is picked up from the carpets. While the company should be responsible for moving your furniture, you should take it upon yourself to remove any delicate or personal items from the rooms. This will save you the worry of having the cleaner's damage something precious to you.

When they arrive you should find out who is the supervisor. This gives you a specific person to talk to. This also a good time to make sure that the cleaners know any necessary information about the house, that there is a dog in residence or to keep the gate shut for example. You also may want to plan a route though the yard to prevent damage to gardens and flowers. This is also the time to specifically discuss with the supervisor any problem spots or areas of special interest. That way you can be clear about what needs to be done before work starts. Point out any stains or marks that specifically need attention beforehand as well.

During the cleaning process you will probably want to remain in or near the house to provide security, but try to make sure you stay out of the way as much as possible. These guys know their job and will usually be finished faster if you stay out of their way.

After the job is completed it is wise to inspect the carpets before the crew leaves. Look to see that all areas that were promised to be cleaned were actually cleaned. Re-check your areas of special interest as well. Point out any problems to the supervisor right away. Do not release payment until you are satisfied with the work that was

performed. Also do not release payments if the price on the estimate is different from the bill's price.

If you do have a problem that the on-site supervisor cannot fix, then you may have to go to the business manager or owner. It is wise to send them a complaint in writing and to keep records of your contact with them. This means that you should keep any e-mails and letters sent between you both. If you are unable to resolve a dispute with the business then you may have to file a complaint with the Better Business Bureau. Hopefully you will avoid any of these negative issues by choosing a reputable carpet cleaning company to begin with.

Don't forget to praise the company when they perform a high quality job for you as well! If you are happy with their service, their employees, their professionalism and the quality of work they performed, then you may wish to consider spread the word. Companies such as this get a large percentage of their work through referrals. If you were happy with the company then you may want to help them out by recommending them to others or placing a good review online. You may be able to help someone else locate a quality carpet cleaning company.

Conclusion

Taking the time to perform a little research and properly interview a carpet cleaning company before you hire them can save you a lot of time and trouble. It can also save you money. The potential problems that can be associated with both a professional carpet cleaning company and the machines and chemicals they use definitely warrant the effort of carefully choosing a company. A little bit of research and interviewing skills can make sure that your carpet cleaning experience is both positive and successful. Choosing a decent carpet cleaning company will make sure that you receive:

- High quality service
- A good price
- Safety for your home and family
- A stress-free and positive cleaning experience
- Clean, attractive carpets

Choosing the right carpet cleaning company is not extremely difficult, it merely requires a little bit of effort on your part. Your carpets are a valuable part of your home and their care is important to maintaining the value of your home. A good carpet cleaning will improve the appearance of your home and reduce problems relating to dust, dirt and other allergy producing particles. Just make sure that you do some homework before you call in a professional, so that you can be sure that you are getting exactly what you are paying for.

Checklist of Questions to Ask

- How long has your company been in business? How long has your business operated in this area?
- Can you provide references?
- Does your company require that its employees and managers receive any form of formal training? Do you perform background checks?
- What types of cleaning methods and equipment will you be using? What kinds of chemicals do you use?
- How much does your company charge per square foot? What are the different service types and their respective
- Is your company insured for loss and damage to my home? How much coverage do you have? Are you licensed and bonded?
- Do you offer any form of satisfaction guarantee? What happens if I am not completely satisfied with the work?
- How many crew members will be coming to my home? Will there be a manager or supervisor with them?

Recommend Resources

Thank you again for downloading this free report. We hope that you found it useful and has given you the confidence you need to find the right carpet cleaner for you.

If you would like help finding a top-quality carpet cleaner please contact us at:

Recommended Carpet Cleaner

See suggested carpet cleaners listed on our website:

<http://www.wichitalinks.com/home-maintenance/>

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